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Prejudices

Charles Macomb Flandrau

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PREJUDICES



PREJUDICES

BY

CHARLES MACOMB FLANDRAU

Author of "Viva Mexico!" "The Diary of a
Freshman," "Harvard Episodes," etc.



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These extracts from my notebook originally appeared in *The Bellman*. For permission to reprint them I beg to thank the editor.

C. M. F.

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A BIRTHDAY PRESENT
FOR
R. B. F.

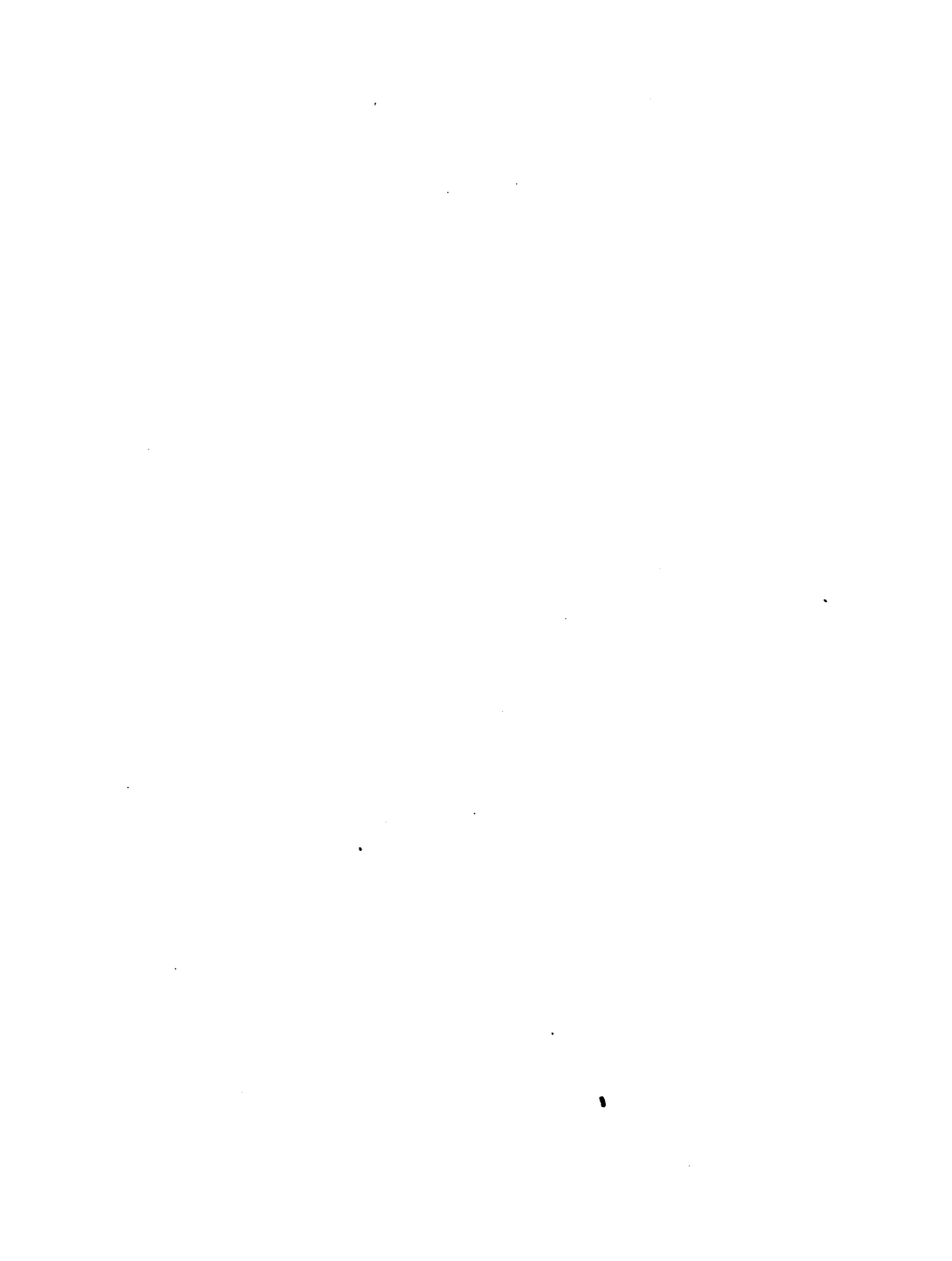


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SOME DOGS

SOME DOGS



SOME DOGS

WHEN the occasion is propitious, I always find it interesting to ask a person I don't know well if he, or she, is fond of dogs. The propitiousness of the occasion is perfect, however, only when there is a dog in the same room or on the same piazza, or wherever we, for the moment, happen to be talking. The reply to this question is to me a kind of exquisitely personal barometer. From it I have always been able to gauge with extreme accuracy the degree to which my sympathy and friendship with him who makes it might possibly rise. False answers to other questions have often deceived me, but a reply to the inquiry: Are you fond of dogs? never has. From the way in which the reply is phrased, from the tone in which it is spoken, from the facial expression that accompanies it, I am instinctively able to "size

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it up," weigh it, and see exactly what there is behind it.

From otherwise altogether estimable women I often elicit this: "Oh, yes, I like dogs; but I like them in their place." This, of course, means that they innately loathe dogs; that they are afraid of them and have a horror of them; that they regard a dog as something which potentially damages furniture and carpets, ruins flower beds, and gives children hydrophobia. By me, anyone who descends to the level of declaring that he "likes dogs, but likes them in their place," is simply struck from the list. It is a most usual reply; it might, indeed, in all propriety, be added to the bromidioms, except that a bromidiom is more a stereotyped little collection of words that slip out with no particular motive or intention, whereas a declaration to the effect that one likes dogs, but likes them in their place, is charged with meanings for anyone who looks for them. It is one of those curious and unexplained facts that almost nobody likes openly to confess an aversion to dogs. Among our acquaintances we

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all have a frank and vehement enemy of cats, but he who hates dogs rarely permits himself to say anything more definitely antagonistic than that he likes dogs—in their place. Under an assumed name he does, from time to time, relieve himself in the correspondence column of a newspaper, but it is invariably under an assumed name. If I disliked dogs, I should not hesitate to say so, just as I do not hesitate to admit that I am terrified by a snake, even if I know it to be harmless, or by the mere idea of ascending to a great height and peering over the edge. Such terrors are illogical, unreasonable, anything you please, but they are in-born and they persist, and few persons object to confessing to them. But no one, on the other hand, likes to have it believed of him either that his sense of humor is not keen, or that he is not fond of dogs. This, of course, is, in the long run, all to the glory of dogs. Even the people who constitutionally dislike them can rarely bring themselves openly to say so.

To me, an inability to love a dog is com-

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prehensible only in the same sense I can comprehend that an uncle of mine, who had a delightful talent for drawing, was hopelessly color-blind, and that another member of my family and two of my friends are what is called "tone-deaf." You might play to them the introduction to "Lohengrin" and then "Annie Rooney" at regular intervals every day for a month, and at the end of that time it would be impossible for them to tell which was which. In other respects adequately equipped, they were simply born without the apparatus necessary to distinguish between one combination of musical sounds and another. They all hate to admit that music gives them little or no pleasure; one of them has even gone so far as to become, in an amateur way, an authority on the history and theory of music, but if in his presence some one begins to play the piano, he is always pathetically unaware as to whether he is listening to a nocturne by Chopin, or a cakewalk sung into popularity by May Irwin.

Persons who "like dogs in their place" al-

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ways seem to me to have been born with much the same sort of defect—or perhaps it would be kinder and truer to call it an omission. But then, my attitude toward dogs may be abnormal. I don't know. I can only recall a lecture by William Dean Howells in which, when he paused to give some incidental advice to young writers, he said, in effect, "In writing, never hesitate to express what you feel is a thought, a sensation or a state of mind peculiar to yourself. It never *is* peculiar to yourself. The paragraph you shrink from writing because you feel it will be understood by you alone, is the one that will be read with the most sympathetic interest." (After all these years I cannot quote Mr. Howells verbatim, but that was his idea; it deeply impressed me.) So here goes.

"Love" is a portentous word that we use rather recklessly, but in considering its meaning, in employing it after the deliberation that is its due, I can, in all seriousness, say that during my lifetime I have loved more dogs than I have loved human beings. There are

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inevitably a few humans whom we love, but, in my own case, I simply cannot evade the fact, even if I wanted to (which I don't), that the human beings I have been unreservedly devoted to have been fewer than the dogs for whom I have experienced the same sort of emotions. What, after all, do we mean, in of course its platonic sense, by love? To me it means a state of mind that would be tremendously upset in a purely disinterested fashion by the sudden elimination of somebody else. It means that somebody has become part of your life, part of your thoughts, part of your habits, and that for the most part you think of him or her or it, as the case may be, with satisfaction. You like to know that "they" (whoever they are) are in the world with you. You regret your partings and look forward to your meetings. You stop and think, sometimes, how different life would be if they died, and when they die, a sort of hole is knocked into your world, that you, for a long time, are unable to fill up. That may or may not be a good definition of affection, but it expresses

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the feeling I have had for a few people and a lot of dogs.

It used to be conventional and proper to bring up children in the belief that the great difference between humans and the so-called lower animals was that the humans had souls and that the other animals had not, but nowadays many parents do not seem to care to assume the responsibility for this distinction, and it is not because they believe we haven't souls (what a convenient word it is!), but because they are inclined to suspect that the kindly beasts who love the children and are beloved by them, who enjoy such intimate companionship with them, have. However this may be, it certainly is a pleasanter, a more ennobling theory; one that tends to reduce human vanity, to extend sympathy, to increase the world's happiness, and to promote a more specific and comprehensive interest in the mysterious and beautiful ways of God.

Most unintentionally I seem to have wandered from dogs and strayed into the domain of metaphysics—or do I mean theology? I

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don't know anything about metaphysics or theology, but I know a great deal about dogs, and it was some dogs I had in mind when I sat down to write. Through a sad, autumn rain I have been staring out of my window into the garden where, side by side, some of them are buried; Friday, Thursday, Tatito, Spy, Rowdy, and—it is but a few lonely weeks that he has been there—Boozy. Mud, an Irish staghound, is at rest on a hillside in Dakota, and Jigger, whom I rarely see now, as he unfortunately for me does not belong to me, is fat, gray, capricious, but still alive, still adorable and adored. How they emerge and come back to me as I stand and look at the frost-bitten hollyhocks on the graves! What individuality each one had; how absolutely different they were; how inseparable they are from any retrospect of my youth—from, indeed, my whole life. With but few intermissions I cannot remember the time when some one of them did not play an intimate, an important, a memorable part in the little drama of my existence. Scarcely any phase of it fails to comprehend

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one of them. I feel myself thinking of them exactly as I think of the members of my family whom I have cared for, who did what it was intended that they should do and who then quietly left. To describe them, to dwell on their traits of character, their mannerisms, their little faults and eccentricities, the setness of their ways as they gradually grew older and then old, would seem to me to be an indelicacy if I did not realize that to most persons a dog is just a dog.

Jigger had, and still has, the most touching faith in the efficacy of prayer. When he needs or wants anything, he assumes the attitude and waits for results. If he is thirsty, one comes upon him appealing to a washstand or to a faucet in the bathroom; if he wants a certain kind of salted cracker he is found tired, but patient, believing, and erect on his hind legs in front of the cupboard in which he knows the crackers are kept. Once in the country he longed for a porcupine that seemed to him an altogether congenial sort of companion, and begged at the foot of a tree until

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the porcupine responded by coming down and shooting twenty-four quills into Jigger's lovely little plush muzzle. It took about a quart of ether, a surgeon, and I forget how many dollars, to extract the quills. Jigger also keeps strange hours. Most dogs, I have found, adapt their hours to those of the persons they live with. They go to bed and arise when the family does, but Jigger, although a dachshund, is in some respects Chinese. Frequently at two or three in the morning it occurs to him that it would be agreeable to have some fun with a golf ball. The fun consists in somebody hiding the ball in a sufficiently discoverable locality and then letting Jigger find it. Perhaps I ought to be in an institution for the feeble-minded, but when Jigger, at 3 or 4 A.M., has deposited a moist golf ball on my neck and has then tugged at my sleeve until I woke up, I have always got out of bed, made a light, and, half dazed with sleep, gone through all the motions of his idea of a thoroughly good time. People who don't like Jigger—and I have begun to suspect that they consist of the

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people whom Jigger cannot, for some reason, endure—say he is selfish. No doubt he is. Most of us are, only some of us have learned how to conceal the fact. Jigger never conceals anything except his golf ball. That, with the air of a conspiring sausage, he sneaks off with, hides from mortal view, and leaves hidden sometimes for a day or two at a time.

Friday and Thursday were part of my life so long ago that I find I can now speak of them with calmness. How shy and reticent and actually morbid Friday was! He had none of the enthusiasms, none of the ebullience, of other dogs. He lived with us, he knew he was one of us, he never temporarily left us for a day, as almost all dogs do from time to time. In his queer, rather uncomfortable way he worshiped us; I know he did because I know it, but he never actually made a demonstration of the fact as other dogs do. I can't remember a single occasion on which he kissed my hand or asked to get into my lap or my bed. Even in his youth he was reserved and dignified and old. He had in life just one great pleasure,

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one dissipation, and that was to hear my father argue a case in court. He almost always went to the court room when my father had a case on hand, and many a judge has angrily ordered him to be removed; but no clerk or sheriff ever succeeded in removing him. Probably it has been forgotten, but at one time in the legal history of Minnesota there was no more prominent figure at the bar than a queer, shy, reticent, morbid but determined little yellow dog named Friday!

What a completely different personality was Spy-boy! An English greyhound with famous ancestors, he was physically a thing of perfect beauty—all fine, steel springs covered with pale brown velvet. When he stood between you and a bright light, the lower part of his stomach was translucent, and you could always see the throbbing of his heart. Although both by birth and by temperament an aristocrat, his breeding had not impaired his intellect. He literally had a fine mind. I think of him as a kind of canine Macaulay, except that he had about him a touch of mysti-

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cism; he heard sounds and smelt odors and saw things that no one else could. For hours at a time I have sat reading in the same room with him, an absolutely silent, scentless, uninhabited room as far as my primitive senses could discover, while he, poised on the delicate arch of his chest, with one front foot across the other (he always assumed that position in his moments of meditation), incessantly twitched his sensitive nostrils, moved his ears, and followed about the room, with his eyes, the invisible things he saw. I could see nothing except what I knew was there; he, however, could. Sometimes he would get up, slowly watch them until they disappeared, and then resume his position. One day, after he had sat this way for an hour or more, he arose, rested his head for a moment on my sister's lap, and then fell dead.

How Rowdy admired him! Rowdy, too, was a greyhound, but poor, silly, stupid old Rowdy's escutcheon was simply a grille of bars sinister. His humble, self-sacrificing attachment to Spy was as if he appreciated that

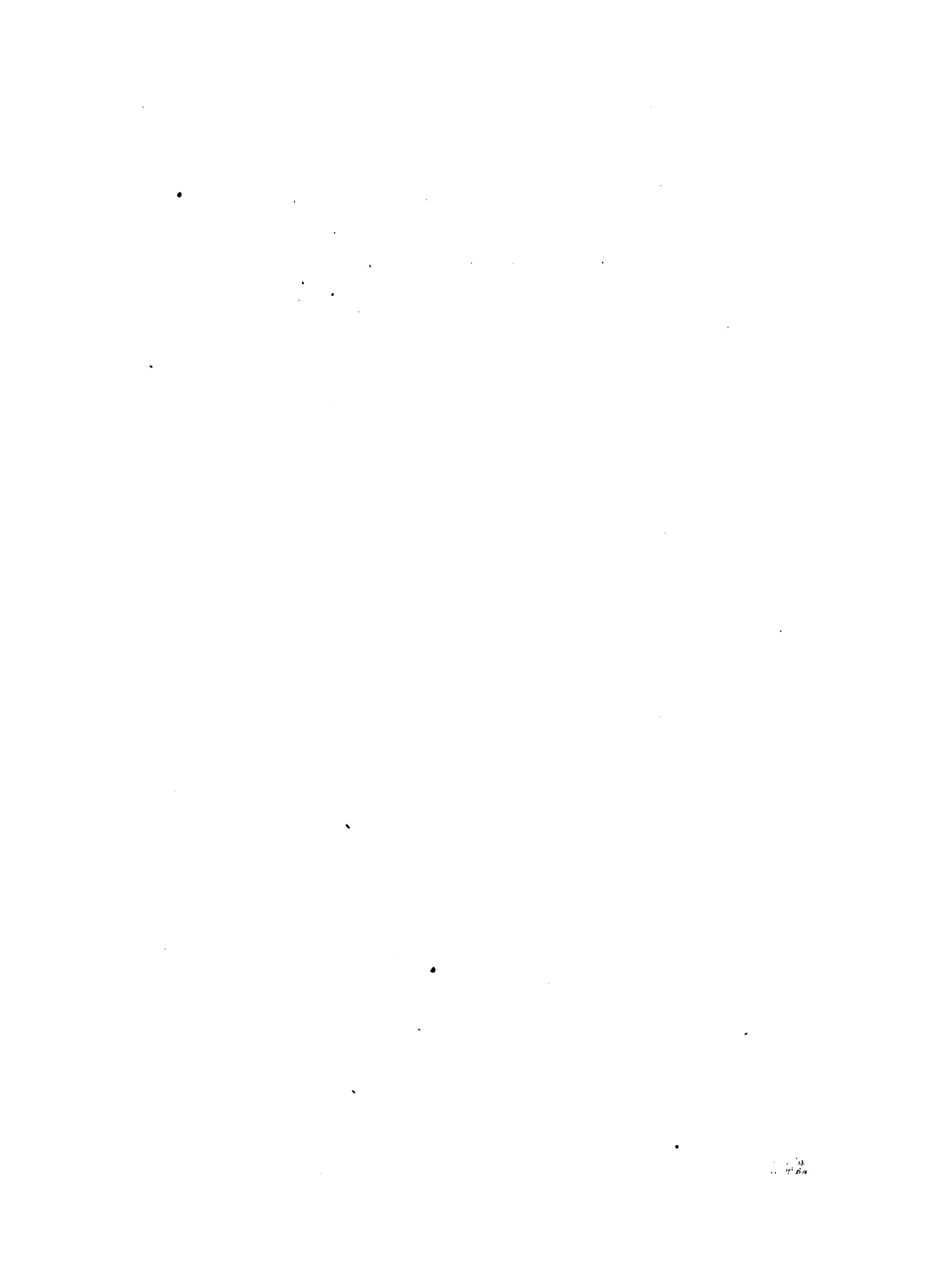
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Spy was the real thing, and that he was only a clumsy imitation. Spy was kind to him; at times it seemed to me that Rowdy's society even mildly amused him, but his kindness was unmistakably that of royalty for some lowly and devoted dependent. Rowdy once chewed the front cover of the book that, in those days, I cared for more than any other: "Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative," by Jane Porter. My youthful fury was extreme when I found the mutilated volume on the piazza, but even at that immature epoch my emotions were hopelessly mixed. I longed to whip Rowdy, because it seemed to me that my favorite book was ruined, but when he came up to me with every appearance of having forgotten the incident, I could only pat his head, as usual. His vandalism brought tears to my eyes, and, after twenty-three years, when I now and then look at the chewed, blue cover of "Sir Edward Seaward's Narrative," and examine the little tooth marks, tears still sometimes come, but they aren't the same kind.

And now they are all asleep under the frost-

SOME DOGS

bitten hollyhocks, which I have turned to look at more than once since I sat down to write. Boozy's life, his dignified old age, and his death are, somehow, too recent to speak of. I should like to, but I can't.



LITTLE PICTURES
OF PEOPLE

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I

MR. AND MRS. PARKE

THEY both looked older than their years, which were respectively sixty and fifty-seven, and this was largely due to the ingrowing life they had always led, the influence of their fine old house on Beacon Hill, and to the individuality, the eccentricity, of Mrs. Parke's clothes. The house was of mellowed red brick, with large, square, high rooms containing, one was at first inclined to think, very little besides dignity and refined sunlight. But a more careful inspection while waiting for Mrs. Parke to come down disclosed a rare combination of comfort and

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beauty. The sitting room in which she and Mr. Parke usually received one belonged to no period and had no "color scheme." It was merely quietly perfect with mahogany, with harmonious chintz, with a few very authentic and interesting pictures, such as an early painting, remarkably definite, even a little hard, by Corot, a religious arrangement of archaic reds and blues by Rossetti, some exquisitely painstaking botanical and architectural pencil sketches by Ruskin, and a panel by Whistler that one felt to be important without, however, knowing just what it was intended to represent. In the center of the room was a large, round, bare mahogany table with books arranged on it, exactly half a foot away from the edge, in a circle. Inside the circle was always a great crystal bowl full of flowers that were sent into town every morning from the Parkes' country place.

Mrs. Parke suggested a vivacious Queen Victoria, if such an image is conceivable. She was of the same height and figure and, like her late majesty, she wore strange clothes that

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were not exactly out of fashion, because they had never been in it. They were simply the clothes of Mrs. Parke and bore no relation or resemblance to any others. She had a great many of them, for, often as I went there on Sunday afternoons, I never saw the same garment twice. They were the most romantic clothes I have ever known off the stage or outside the glass cases of a museum, for, many years before, Mrs. Parke's greatuncle had been an East India merchant and, when he died, his grandniece inherited, among other things, bale upon bale of the marvelous fabrics his ships had brought back from the East—from India, from Burmah, from Siam, Japan and China; silks, brocades, crêpes, cloth of silver and cloth of gold and many more materials that no longer had names and the secret of whose dyes had been forgotten. For almost forty years Mrs. Parke had dressed only in these splendid, brilliant stuffs, and there were many bales still unopened. Some of the materials rustled stiffly and some of them clung, but she had them all made up in the same way, a kind

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of loose wrapper, and with them she wore on her head a small cap of rose point, the top of which was a bit of the dress.

On a pedestal in the hall the marble bust of a handsome young man still faintly suggestive of her husband testified that the Parkes had been to Italy on their wedding trip, but they had never gone abroad again. With one exception their journeys for thirty-six or -seven years had consisted solely of the annual trip on the ninth of April to their country place, a distance of eighteen miles, and the annual trip back to town again on the tenth of November. Once they had spent two weeks with a senatorial relative in Washington, but on their return Mr. Parke had nervous prostration for three months and they did not again indulge in so daring an experiment.

I often wondered how all the years had slipped by without somehow leaving them stranded, for neither of them had ever "done" anything, even in the most prosaic interpretation of the term. Mr. Parke had studied law, but he had never practiced it. He read

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widely, memoirs, poetry, history, essays and an occasional novel, and he remembered much of what he read, but his reading was of the desultory kind. He could quote from all literatures but he had no literary hobbies. Mrs. Parke did not even read. Instead she knitted soft, useless things on thick, wooden needles, and when she was in the country armed herself with a flat straw hat, chamois gloves, a pair of scissors, and then proceeded to drive the Scotch gardener to drink. They had never cared much for society. It was enough to know that its doors were open to them, although at one period Mr. Parke must have gone to a great many small dinners at clubs to meet celebrities, for his fund of intimate and delightful anecdote was inexhaustible.

But the years had slipped by and they had not been stranded. They imagined, indeed, that they always had been and still were two of the busiest and most important persons in town. They were sixty and fifty-seven when I first met them, and old for their ages. One scarcely expected them to be very actively

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occupied with the contemporaneous, but after I had seen them often enough to become acclimated (no other word will quite do) I realized that they never had been, that they were then exactly as they always had been, only more so. Their entire lives had been spent in the deification of the unessential, in the reduction of puttering to a science. They had puttered their lives away and were still puttering, only, as they grew older, with a greater intensity, and from the first their lives had been extremely happy. I had never known two human beings who had so successfully mastered the art of transforming molehills into mountains. It was their sole occupation.

“ My dear fellow, I *am* so glad to see you,” Mr. Parke would exclaim as he bustled into the room when I went there to luncheon, and he meant it, for they were both kind and hospitable. “ I’m afraid I’m a minute or two late, but this morning I’ve been driven, positively driven, from the moment I got out of my bath—and by matters I simply can’t trust to anyone else. They leave me no time for any-

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thing; I mean the things I like to do and want to do. But you remember that line from Browning's Paracelsus, don't you? 'Let each task present its petty good to thee.' I always try to think of that."

"You've worked too hard this morning, Henry," Mrs. Parke would say, glancing solicitously up from her needles, "and you know it always brings on your gout. The trouble is, he *will* overdo." Later on, during luncheon, it comes out that the exhausting labors of the day consisted of Mr. Parke's making out and sending a check to the associated charities, writing a short letter to the *Transcript*, refusing an invitation to dinner, and changing his clothes. Mrs. Parke had also spent an exciting but difficult morning. A new expressman had delivered the daily box of flowers at the wrong house, and from the dear lady's account of the incident one inferred that for several hours the destiny of nations had shuddered in the balance.

"I sat and sat and sat," she would dramatically declaim, "but no expressman. I

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couldn't understand it, and it was long, long past the time when I ought to have been arranging the flowers. You can imagine the state I was in."

One of Mr. Parke's resources was changing his clothes. In the country, for instance, he dressed with his usual minuteness for breakfast, but if the gardener sent word that an orchid had bloomed, or that a branch on one of the trees was turning yellow before it ought to, or that some Sunday tripper had left a sardine tin and two eggshells on the cliff walk—if, in fact, he felt it imperative to leave the house even for a short time, the act necessitated a change of costume. He would put on tweed knickerbockers and a kind of shooting jacket. On his return he would change again to still another suit for luncheon, afterwards the tweeds again if he went for a walk, then something else for tea and, finally, evening dress for dinner. They both also spent a great deal of time in showing and explaining their two houses to visitors—the closet doors that could not possibly slam, be-

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cause their area had been exactly adjusted to the resistance of the number of cubic feet of air inside, or words to that effect; the ventilating apparatus that forced every lungful they breathed through three thicknesses of sterilized cheese cloth; the heating arrangements that did something quite uncanny, I forget what.

“You have seen the unceasing labor of forty years,” Mr. Parke would usually assure you when you had finished the tour of inspection. Their greatest triumph, however, consisted of the fact that, when they left town for the country on April the ninth, they took no luggage with them, not even a small handbag. They drove to the station empty handed, and on arriving at their destination resumed their existence, as it were, in duplicate. To the least detail there were replicas of every garment, every shoe, every toilet article, every skein of worsted and every book the two possessed.

The last time I saw them they had both aged considerably and they were, if possible,

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more "driven" than usual. A distant cousin had written that he expected to pass through town on his way to Europe, that he wanted to see them both and would like to stay all night at their house. With the letter in her agitated hand Mrs. Parke despairingly appealed to me.

"But how can we?" she wailed, as one of the two men servants who had brought in the tea things quietly restored a book I had disarranged to its geometric site on the mahogany table. "I don't see how we can. We've been back from the country for only three weeks, and the house is in a perfect whirl!" I thought of the eight immense, unoccupied bedrooms upstairs, and for a moment had visions of my own family sleeping on the floor or in the bath-tub or on the sewing machine in order to make room for unexpected guests. But I agreed that the distant cousin was most inconsiderate, not to say unreasonable.

Mr. Parke came in, but could only shake my hand and apologize for running away. For a month he had been worrying for fear the family tomb in Mount Auburn cemetery might

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be "damp" and he had at last decided that the only thing to do was to drive out there and "see for himself."

II

THE FOURTH

TWICE a day the fourth officer walked rapidly the length of the promenade deck with an easy, swinging stride and then vanished up a steep flight of steps that led to the bridge. These brief appearances began to interest me, for he was extraordinarily young and good-looking, and it seemed to me but natural that he should at least say good morning to some of the young girls who gazed at him over the tops of their books as he went by and who very clearly would have enjoyed making his acquaintance. But he never stopped and he never spoke. It was not until the fifth day out that he smiled gravely and saluted as he passed my chair. The next day we anchored in a landlocked tropical harbor, and as he was

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on duty at the top of those wobbly steps (I never am able to remember the nautical name for anything) by which one descends against the side of the ship to the launches, and as there was nothing for him to do after he had assured himself that none of the fat ladies and old gentlemen who were going ashore had fallen into the sea, he strolled out of the broiling sun, where he had been standing, immaculate and amiable, for two hours and a half, and came over to me.

I am not exactly a punctilious person, especially on a hot day in the tropics, but as the Fourth did not sit down on any of the numerous vacant chairs in my neighborhood I, somewhat to my surprise, found myself standing up—standing up, as I rarely was inspired to do in the presence of the captain; and the Fourth was almost, if not quite, young enough to be my son. He took my involuntary display of respect for himself and his white uniform as a matter of course, and as the launches were not to return for an hour we leaned against the rail on the shady side and talked, some-

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times in English (his English was correct, although limited) but more often in German. That was the beginning of my acquaintance with the Fourth, one that continued under similar circumstances for several months and proved in many respects to be enlightening.

More than anything else, perhaps, it brought home to me the meaning of discipline long continued. He had learned his profession on a German training ship, starting in at the age of fourteen, and from there he had gone to the navy. Now he was an officer on one of the great German passenger ships. In the meanwhile he had found time to take and pass the naval examinations that made him eligible to the command of a German vessel in any part of the world, and his age was just twenty-four.

I confess I gasped when I heard it (it was the second officer who told me), although I ought to have known it without being told, for from the first I had been struck by his impeccable physical refinement, the kind that but rarely survives a quarter of a century. After

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that, when he was quietly giving orders to middle-aged quartermasters, skilfully directing the movements of the launches, making mathematical calculations on a slip of paper behind the compass at sunset or pacing the bridge, I often found myself contrasting him with various other young gentlemen of twenty-four some five or six thousand miles away. Living night and day with his watch practically in his hand, rarely sleeping more than four hours at a time, obeying orders and observing regulations blindly, faithfully, without a question or even a thought, had done something to him that was to me very curious, very interesting and very fine. It had not crushed him, it had molded him. It had not changed his nature, it had taken charge of it and directed it. It had not in the least made him prematurely old, it had developed to the fullest extent the capacities of his youth.

He was so reserved, so self-contained at first, that I wondered if he was not perhaps just a beautiful piece of Teutonic machinery, until one morning we steamed into a harbor where

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the company he served had met with the most hideous ill luck. He pointed out to me the dismantled hulls of two noble ships that had run ashore and were a total loss. One of them had struck because it was impossible for anyone on board to know that an earthquake had destroyed the lighthouse the day before; the other lay tragically on its side among the breakers because the captain had attempted to hit the channel in the dark without a pilot. The Fourth had been on that ship at the time and, when he told me about it, I had to occupy myself with my field glasses and pretend I didn't know that two large tears had welled up, slipped over and were finding their way down his face. He had been off duty and asleep when the accident happened, and knew nothing about it until the quartermaster woke him up, told him, and said that the captain could not be found. In spite of the fact that the captain's room was dark, something impelled the Fourth to enter.

“Just inside the door, my foot slipped on something,” he said, “and when I turned on

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the light—” . . . Well, immediately after the accident the captain had blown the top of his head off with a rifle.

“Under exactly the same circumstances would you have done the same thing?” I asked the Fourth.

“Oh, yes,” he answered simply, “but I should have waited until I got all the passengers safely on shore.” He was far from being a phlegmatic German machine. As I grew to know him well I saw that he was high-strung and nervous, that he was after all just twenty-four with the longings and aspirations, the excellent discontent of an intelligent and spirited boy. It was all there but it was under admirable control. It had been trained to obey, and not to command, the Fourth.

His existence was in many ways an extremely lonely one, and all the more so because it was passed within touching distance of a gay, rich, pleasure-seeking crowd, with which, it was an understood thing by the company, he was to have no friendly relations.

“On a long voyage like this, where we stop

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every few days and I stand here on duty, it's different. I can talk to people now and then and get to know them, just as I know you, but on the seven-day trips across the Atlantic I never speak to a soul. Often, when there are five or six hundred passengers on board, I never even see one of them all the way over. I'm either on the bridge, or asleep, or in my room, or on our own deck. We're supposed to stay on our own deck when we have nothing to do."

It was also, judged by material standards, a discouraging existence. There had been occasions when for hours at a time the Fourth had been chiefly responsible for the safety of hundreds of lives and about a million dollars' worth of property; and for his expert knowledge, his anxiety, his prolonged nervous strain he received the munificent salary of twenty-eight dollars a month—but little more than enough in the tropics, where he had to put on always one, and sometimes two suits of white a day, to pay his laundry bills.

"Nobody but the stewards get rich at sea,"

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he laughed when we were discussing the matter.

“Do you ever think of giving it up—of doing something else?” I asked him.

“I think of it,” he answered, “but I know I shan’t. I like to look forward to having a command, although I’ll probably be eighty when I get one and too old to take it, and, besides, what could I do? I’ve been on the bridge of a ship since I was fourteen. I don’t know how to breathe inside of a house.”

When we were in port and he could get off, we now and then dined together on shore and went to a show. By way of returning these small hospitalities he did the only thing he very well could do, which was to ask me to go to his room in the evening to have a glass of beer. This I liked infinitely better than an evening spent in the restaurant or the theater of some sultry South American town. His room was large and cool, high up and forward, with neither a sound nor a vibration. It always seemed to be detached from the world, suspended in some way between the sea and

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the sky, and in it the Fourth, when he got to know me better, felt at liberty to wear his second cleanest white ducks instead of his first, to sprawl on the sofa, to play with his pet monkey, to talk nonsense and to be quite frankly the kid he really was.

One evening he put the monkey in bed with its head on the pillow, drew the cover up around its neck and stretched out beside it. A huge, bare-footed sailor came into the room, managed in some inscrutable fashion to take off his cap with a glass of beer for me in one hand and a cup of coffee for the Fourth in the other, placed the things on the table and tipped out. Somewhere far below us, young men and girls were waltzing frantically in the heat, women were dripping over games of bridge as if their souls depended on the outcome, men in the smoking room were getting drunk and calling one another names. But where we were it was, as always, cool and silent and peaceful. One has to lead some kind of a life, and as I sat there thinking, it occurred to me that, even if it was poorly paid and at times lonely, there

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was something very sane and useful and good about the life of the Fourth.

In a little while he would look at his watch and exclaim a trifle diffidently, but with an unmistakable resumption of authority:

“It’s ten o’clock, you must go now.” Then he would almost instantly fall asleep, sleep for four hours, spend four more alone with the trackless waters and the southern stars, bathe, breakfast and begin another day with a clear brain, steady nerves and untroubled eyes.

As often happens when two persons have remained silent in each other’s presence for several minutes, his train of thought was identical with mine, for when he spoke it was to say: “After all, I do like it.”

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THE crew, much to its surprise, was paid off at Havana and furnished with a variety of explanations that did not particularly explain. Most of the men were bitter about it, but Lansing and Hayward were too unsophisticated, too new to the ways of the sea, to realize at first that they had been imposed upon. They had shipped on the wretched little steamer in New York in a sudden and curiously belated access of romanticism. For Hayward, who was twenty-three, had worked as an electrician since he was seventeen, and Lansing, who could scarcely remember a time when he had not driven a grocer's wagon, was twenty-four. The sea had never been a boyish passion with them; they, indeed, had rarely seen it. As far as their

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previous relations with it had been concerned, New York might almost have been situated in the middle of a Dakota prairie. Their lives had always been city lives, but not of the kind that finds its way into popular fiction. For, in expressing themselves, they were not accustomed to employ a semi-unintelligible jargon of new slang, and from personal experience they knew almost as little about the Bowery as they knew about the sea. Their vocabularies, instead of being large and florid, were small and simple; their lapses from grammar were too usual to be interesting. They knew a few streets of the immense place exceedingly well, but they were, for the most part, lower-middle-class, commonplace, entirely respectable streets. They both had lived at home and worked hard—conscientiously, one would say, except that in the routine of their existences conscience played but little part. They had worked hard from habit, from the realization that they could easily be replaced and from an innate desire to keep their “jobs.”

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It was strange, or perhaps it wasn't strange (How do I know?), that the sea had all at once irrelevantly called to them. If they had been fond of reading, their embarkation might plausibly have been the practical attempt to make a dream come true. But they rarely read anything except the larger headlines of one-cent newspapers. The voluminous literature of adventure in foreign countries, of a wild, free life on the high seas, was almost as unknown to them as the thing itself. And yet, one day, they went to sea.

Early in April, an electric car smashed into Lansing's delivery wagon and hurt the horse, to say nothing of the wagon itself and its valuable contents. The fault was neither Lansing's nor the motorman's, but the grocer both discharged Lansing and collected two hundred and fifty dollars from the street railway company. Out of employment, Lansing saw something of New York. He had been faithful and careful, and in a dumb, uncomplaining sort of way he felt aggrieved and rebellious. His long, aimless walks, during the

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first few days of his idleness, sometimes took him to the water's edge, and one morning he found himself on a Wall Street wharf, just as a steamer was about to leave for the tropics. Although he didn't precisely know what it all meant, the experience was, somehow, a moving one. There was an army of half-savage negroes—unlike any negroes he had ever seen—wheeling baggage on trucks and, with incoherent yelps, filling with freight a coarse net of rope that lifted, swung, sank, disappeared, and then reappeared limp and hungrily empty. There were fat, inexplicable women with improbable complexions, accompanied by lean, sallow, gesticulating men, who darted from their trunks to the ship and back again in a frenzy of excitement; and there were smells. Lansing did not know it (he knew very little) but it was the smells that, vulgarly speaking, “did the business.” There was a kind of background—a fundamental smell—of pitch, of tar, of resin; but here and there, protruding from this, as he strolled up and down the long, inclosed wharf, was the rank, searching smell

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of unroasted coffee, the fruity fragrance of pineapples, the pungent acidity of tomatoes, the heavy sweetness of vanilla. As each odor came to him he inhaled it deeply, curiously, and for him, somewhat excitedly.

After the vessel had slipped away and disappeared around the corner of the wharf, Lansing had emerged with the intention of traversing Wall Street and taking an uptown car, but a young and slightly drunken sailor from a warship in the harbor had, à propos of nothing at all, thrown an arm about his waist and led him to a saloon across the way. They had together only a glass of beer apiece, but they had sat down to it at a little table and the sailor had talked.

In the sphere of life to which they both belonged there is a directness and a frankness in the matter of intercourse that would be impossible for most persons higher in the social order. Lansing had made many acquaintances and even a few friends by speaking or being spoken to by detached young men of his own age standing on street corners. Most of his

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acquaintances among girls had been begun in the same way. They had spoken to him or he had spoken to them—it was immaterial—and if they found each other congenial they sometimes met again; sometimes they didn't. But, in any event meeting, talking, parting, involved nothing. It was merely an incident, often a pleasant one, of the kind the so-called upper classes know but little. It seemed perfectly natural to Lansing that the sailor, whom he never had seen before and probably would never see again, should offer him a glass of beer and tell him of his voyage around the world, and that he himself should respond with his accident, his discharge from the grocery—in a word, his “troubles,” as he finally called them.

“A sailor *has* no troubles,” the other declared as they got up to go; and he altogether looked it. After that, Lansing spent most of his time on the wharves and on Sunday afternoon he took Hayward with him.

Hayward's experience and education was as limited as his friend's, but he was of finer clay.

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What Lansing only felt, Hayward both felt and translated into words.

“Gee, look at them turtles!” he would exclaim at a row of the huge, gasping tortured creatures, lying on their backs and bound to a board by ropes punched through their bleeding flippers. “They come out of the water to lay eggs in the sand, and then you run out of the bushes and turn them over on their backs with a pole. I bet there’s money in turtles.” Or, “Gosh, what a lot of pineapples! How would you like to go down there, Lansing, where it’s always summer, and just sit around while the niggers work, and send millions of pineapples back here to be sold at fifty cents apiece?”

“Forty-five,” corrected Lansing, who had “delivered” them all his life, but who, until recently, had impartially given them the same consideration he had been accustomed to bestow upon a potato. Once they stood for an hour in front of ten cages full of white and yellow cockatoos. They were even more disturbing, more convincing than the incoherent

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negroes, the excitement of departure, the odor of exotic fruits.

“Down there you can see them flying around wild,” Hayward meditated aloud. “Down there!” The words began to mean wonderful, incommunicable things to both of them. “Down there” was the shimmering, beautiful, hot, mysterious and seductive end of the earth that a Frenchman is always able to evoke for an instant, when, in a certain languid, reminiscent tone, he pronounces the words “*là bas.*”

So they shipped on a tramp steamer and after a week they had been paid off at Havana. In Havana they spent an entrancing day and evening (Hayward bought an imitation diamond brooch at a place on Obispo street where the revolving electric lights in the window elicited the last glitter), but the next day was a good deal of a bore. They had seen the town, there was no point in seeing it over again, and they were unused to idleness. Both of them would have jumped at the opportunity of returning to New York, but as no oppor-

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tunity of doing so presented itself neither of them had been obliged to admit it. On the third day, however, they did move on to Vera Cruz. To Hayward, Vera Cruz was a name he had heard (Lansing had never even heard it), but had he been asked what country it was in he could not have told. He had an idea that it was near New Orleans and Galveston. In another week they were there—paid off again and turned loose in the Plaza.

Again they spent a notable day. They wandered about the streets, they went to a wedding in a church, they marveled at the unmolested buzzards filching garbage from the open drains along the curbstones, they walked at sunset to the end of the long breakwater and watched the fishermen come in with their gorgeous catch of redsnapper. In the evening they went to a moving-picture show where they saw a realistic bull fight and a manufactured American train robbery. (This last gave them their first twinge of homesickness; the Pullman cars and the passengers looked so natural.) When it was over, they again

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sought the Plaza, where, in the sultry air, a compact mass of people was slowly forcing its way around and around to the music of an enormous band high above them among the trees in the center. They slept at an inexpensive lodging house to which they had been taken by one of the stokers.

But the next day was very like the second day at Havana, except that the possibilities of Vera Cruz seemed to be fewer. They could not walk in any direction without soon coming to the water or to a hot and dreary stretch of sand, and in their unconsciously blasé New York fashion they had become, by the second day, hardened to ragged Indians, enormous straw hats and scarlet *sarapes*. They sat on a shady bench in the Plaza and discussed an immediate return to New York. Lansing was for going overland; he had a hazy idea that they were near the border, and he was amazed and troubled for a moment when the stoker, whom they several times met again, laughed and told them that the border was a half a week away in a train. This, of course, they

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knew they could not afford, and they decided to work their way back, as they had come, on a steamer.

After that they spent most of their time on the docks, or in front of the hotels and cafés near them, waylaying skippers and mates. But places on ships bound for New York were apparently not to be had for the asking. The men to whom they applied were invariably curt and definite when they weren't, as sometimes happened, brutally abusive. This was annoying although it was also, now and then, amusing. They, as yet, had not begun to regard matters in the light of a "situation," for they still had a little money. At this period of their ebbing fortunes it seemed to them that they were making a sort of humiliating concession when they ceased to specify New York as their destination, and resolved to sail on any ship bound for any American port. But here, again, they were met with the same irritated outbursts, or brief, cold denials.

They did not know it, because outside of the little ruts in which they had always moved

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back and forth, they knew nothing, but Mexico, in winter, is one of the great goals of the American tramp. Thousands of them, in perpetually following at the heels of summer, drift across the border and gradually wander from Laredo to San Luis Potosi, to the City of Mexico, to Tampico and to Vera Cruz. They approach one in the Plaza, in the Alameda, at the doors of hotels and theaters and restaurants, and, with an always interesting fiction, extract twenty-five cents from one in the name of patriotism. When the spring comes and it is once more warm at home, they haunt the seaports, endeavoring to return by water. For short-handed ships at Vera Cruz in April and May there is an embarrassment of choice—a glut. Without in the least suspecting it, Hayward and Lansing had, in the eyes of the world, become tramps, seeking a return passage.

The heat had begun to be intense and the invariable refusal of their services was discouraging, but far more so were the interminable mornings and afternoons and evenings

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when, for the time being, they gave up their quest and sat on a bench in the Plaza, or, at sunset, strolled down to the breakwater for the redsnappers and the evening breeze. They had left home together and they stayed together as a matter of course, for they did not know anyone else, but they no longer had anything in particular to say to each other. For the most part they were silent and listless. They spoke only when something occurred to them relevant to what, at last, had begun to strike them as their "situation."

"It'll save money if we have one room instead of two, and sleep in the same bed," Hayward declared one night, after a day in which they had scarcely spoken at all.

"If we don't get up so early—What's the use anyhow?—We won't have to pay for breakfast. Two meals is enough if you're asleep," suggested Lansing a day or so later. And as long as they had money they spent it only for their bed and their two daily meals. Then came the inevitable day when they no longer had money, when they realized that

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the few cents they were spending for their supper were the last. It was disagreeable and they had begun to hate Vera Cruz—the monotony of it, the enforced idleness, the blistering heat, the rumor (they heard it from some English sailors on the dock) of yellow fever, and their inability to leave it all behind them. But although they were alarmed they were not yet panic-stricken. They each had a dress-suit case, an extra suit of clothes, an extra pair of shoes, some shirts and underclothes, a hat as well as a cap, three razors and a cheap watch.

The watch went first. They didn't need a watch. When they wished to know the time they could glance up from their bench at the clock on the tower of the "municipal palace." After this they parted on two successive days with the dress-suit cases, then the hats, the clothes and shoes and shirts and underclothes, one by one. The disposal of two of the razors gave them for forty-eight hours almost a sense of opulence. Lansing did not know there was a third razor and Hayward did not tell him of

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it. Hayward was an innately neat person, and at the Y. M. C. A., to which he belonged in New York, he had grown to look upon free soap and unending hot and cold shower-baths in a light that was spiritual as well as physical. He was good-looking and he knew it. The thought of becoming an unshaven thing was abhorrent to him. Starvation, just then, he felt he could face, but the prospect of a week's beard revolted him. So he twisted the razor into a piece of newspaper and secreted it in his pocket. As long as he and Lansing were together he knew he would not be able to shave; he could not confess to the possession of anything so convertible into money without immediately converting it. But the sensation of guilt was at first dispelled by an anticipatory thrill at the thought of the day when he could once more look clean and fresh and pink under his sunburn. He did not work it out in words, but the razor was to him a tangible symbol of self-respect, and he clung to it, although it would have bought them both the food they had begun to need.

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“ We’ve got to beat it. We’ve got to beat it right away,” he said one morning, when they awoke to the prospect of a foodless day. “ They don’t want us on the ships, but they’ll have to take us anyhow. We’ll sneak on board and hide. After they get started they’ll have to keep us. They can’t throw us overboard, and we’ll work. Gee, how I want to work!”

That day they ate nothing, but in the evening they marvelously succeeded in smuggling themselves on a steamer bound for New Orleans, and in the prospect of getting away they forgot that they were hungry. One of the crew, with whom they struck up an acquaintance on the dock, seemed impressed by the sincerity with which they swore they would pay him if he would make it possible for them to return to where they could once more work. He agreed to help them conditionally; that is, he would get them on board and stow them away, if he could do it without too much risk to himself. The attendant conditions had to be just right; sometimes it was easy enough and sometimes it couldn’t be done at all.

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In their case the right conditions were unexpectedly furnished in the fraction of a second that it takes a cable to snap and drop a large piece of locomotive from the main deck on a dozen barrels of apples in the hold below. In the uproar that followed and continued for five or six minutes, the only cool and competent person was the new friend of Hayward and Lansing. He had been waiting for something of the kind to happen, and he took instant advantage of it. While everyone else was screaming Spanish oaths and peering into the hatchway at the ruins, he hustled the two on board and hid them. An hour and a half later, Hayward, dazed and suffocated, was dragged out by the feet and kicked down the gang plank. Lansing did not reappear. From the dock, Hayward watched the vessel become first a black speck and then a suggestion of low-lying smoke in the dusk.

He was all at once horribly alone and lonely, but it did not occur to him to feel resentful. Lansing's luck had been good; his own had been bad. That was all there was to it. He

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was glad someone had been lucky. That night he went back to the lodging house and slept in the bed—it was the last bed he ever slept in—and as he had no money, he in the morning gave the *patron* his razor.

Then began for him an existence, the absolute hopelessness of which appalled and crushed him. At first a ship to New York had seemed to him the only solution of his predicament; then the idea of a ship to anywhere had become a vision of paradise; now he saw that ships were an impossibility. As the season advanced the officers became more and more vigilant. A shabby, unshaven young man could not go within speaking distance of a ship. He made the rounds of the hotels and asked for work—any kind of work—but there was none. He tried to get employment as a laborer on the dock, but the foreman, who spoke English, laughed and asked him why he wished to commit suicide.

“An American keeping one of us out of a job would be stabbed in an hour,” he declared, and refused to hire him. He managed for a

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time to keep alive, because one day he remembered that on the little finger of his left hand he had a gold ring. For years it had been so much a part of him that it had not occurred to him to sell it. The discovery of it came as a kind of revelation and made it possible for him to eat, sparingly, for two days. Then a brisk little American woman, in a white duck suit, approached him in the Plaza and gave him twenty-five centavos for delivering hand bills. She was a fortune teller—a “seeress,” and had recently opened a “Studio of the Occult” in the Hotel Segurança, across the way. She seemed like a kind, capable little creature and once, when he had not eaten for two days, he went to the hotel and asked for her; but as he was unshaven and dazed and rather vague, they assumed him to be a drunken tramp and drove him away. Then he made the acquaintance, in the Plaza, of an utterly unreal person of no particular age, who dragged out of the hotel and in again every afternoon for half an hour or so, with the aid of a cane. His face was bloated and discolored, but his body was

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no more than a semi-upright arrangement of bones. Hayward at first thought he was an invalid in the last stages, then felt sure he was a drunkard, and, finally, it came to him that the man was a slave to some drug. He would occasionally give Hayward the twenty-five centavos on which he could exist for several days, and then, after a long silence on a bench, petulantly demand: "What do you do with all the money I give you? The day before yesterday I gave you three hundred dollars. I'm afraid you're extravagant." In one of his more lucid intervals, he suggested the American consul, and Hayward went to the consulate.

"I don't want to beg, I want to work," he said when the consul wheeled from a desk and impatiently eyed him.

"Oh, I hear that twenty times a day. Get out and don't come back," exclaimed the consul wearily. He "got out" and he did not go back. Something in the man's dumpy, coarse, dirty-fingernailed personality told him it would be useless. Then he tried to steal a

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ride on a freight train bound for the City of Mexico, and was discovered and thrown out at the second station, twelve miles away. It merely meant his walking back to Vera Cruz in the blistering heat over the endless sand dunes and past the fever-stricken marshes where the mosquitoes devoured him. He spent as much as he dared of that night on a bench in the Plaza, but for fear the policemen might begin to think he was sitting too long in one place, he, from time to time, aroused himself and walked down to the docks, or to the two railway stations at opposite ends of the town. The humiliation of it was worse, somehow, than his hunger and his fatigue. The next night, however, the need of sleep was overpowering, and he lay down on the beach at the edge of the town. In spite of the ants that swarmed up under his clothes and stung him from his neck to his ankles, he slept the sleep of exhaustion. But to sleep on the beach at Vera Cruz is against the law, and at three o'clock in the morning he was arrested and thrown into a vile and crowded room

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under the tower, whose clock of late had struck for him so many aimless, hopeless hours. In the morning the judge dismissed him with the reminder (a negro from Havana translated the ultimatum) that a second offense would mean thirty days.

Then followed a horrible week—a last nightmare. He heard from a trainman that there was work at the machine shops of Casa Blanca, forty miles away, and, in the incredible heat, he walked there, and when he found the rumor was untrue, he walked back again. On the way, he lived on poisonous water and a yellow nut that looked like dates and grew on scrubby palm trees by the roadside. He did not know how long it had taken him to make the journey. When he once more reached the inevitable Plaza, he was dizzy with hunger, and as he thought he was going to die, he reeled over to where the world was dining under the arcade on the sidewalk. There were fifteen or twenty tables, and after passing them all he picked out one where five Americans, three men and two women, had

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finished eating and were lolling back in their chairs, waiting for their plates of half-consumed meat to be removed.

“I’m not a beggar,” he began hurriedly, taking off his hat. “I’m not asking you for money, but I haven’t had anything to eat today. Please let me have some of what you’ve left before the waiter takes it away.” They might have given it to him, and then again they might not have. He never knew. The waiter came back just then and authoritatively slapped him away with a soiled napkin.

“What pretty hair he had,” one of the women reflected. “It grows back from his forehead in a kind of proud way. Of course he’s a fake.”

“I didn’t notice his hair, but he had perfect teeth,” said the other. “This country’s just full of tramps.”

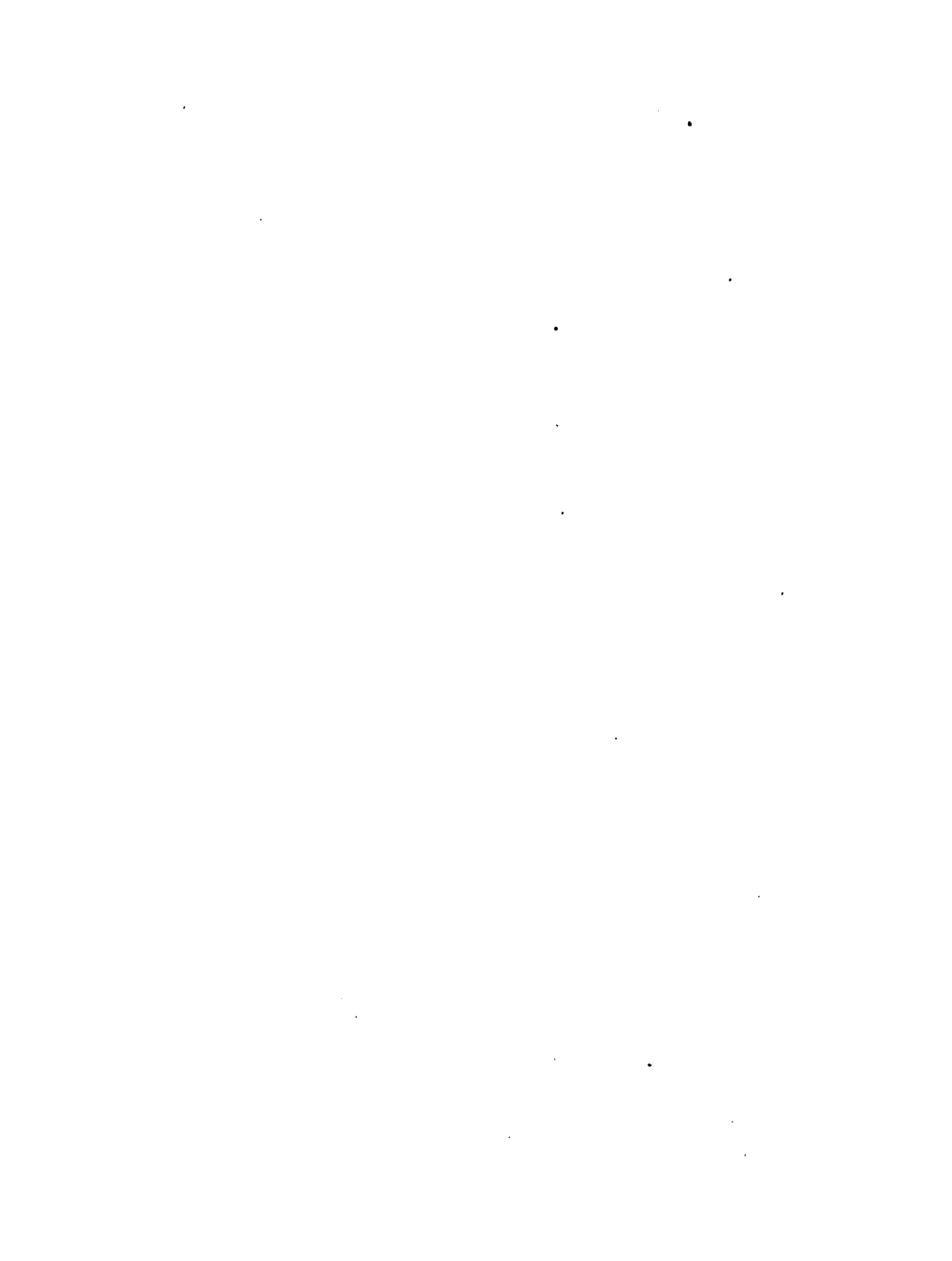
Late that night, when a young man skeptically gave him a Mexican dollar he wished to get rid of, as he was sailing for New York in the morning, Hayward suddenly burst into tears and, with his head on the back of the

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bench, sobbed for half an hour. He lived on the dollar for five days. In the meantime, the drug fiend died, and the seeress departed for the City of Mexico.

Hayward had never read "Les Misérables," but on the sixth day after the young man had given him the dollar, he remembered that on one of his teeth was a gold crown, and, without success, he asked a dentist to pull and buy it. He had nothing to eat that day, and at night the desire to lie down and sleep instead of hypocritically walking about as if he were going somewhere became irresistible. So he went again to the beach and lay down among the ants, and in the morning a policeman scared away the buzzards that had already begun to hop about him and crane their hideously naked necks. The American consul, greatly bored (the heat was frightful), officially glanced at him and then they dumped him into a hole with an Indian who had been stabbed in a drunken row the night before.

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A LITTLE old man came into the steamship office where I was buying a ticket. He had mild, kindly eyes, pink cheeks, a vague, white beard and a deferential, rather apologetic manner.

“Have you any new literature to-day?” he inquired of the clerk after some hesitation.

“Sure,” the clerk answered genially, and picked him out a bundle of those prettily and skilfully illustrated pamphlets describing almost every known country on the globe. He also gave him plans of ships, price lists of the various staterooms and dates of sailing.

“He must be something of a traveler,” I suggested when the old man, after many thanks, left the office.

The clerk smiled.

“The old guy and his wife have been al-

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most everywhere," he answered; "but I don't think that either of them has ever been out of this town," he enigmatically added, "and they're both about a hundred and fifty."

"Yes?" I said encouragingly.

"He comes in regularly twice a year," the clerk went on, "and gets all the 'literature,' as he calls it, about the summer and winter tours. Then he and his wife take the trips by what I call the Easy Chair Route. They not only know all about the railway trains and ships and stagecoaches, they study up the places, as they go along, out of books they get from the public library. I bet they know a darned sight more about Europe, Arope, Irope and Sirope than most of the people who've been there."

The clerk's remarks called up for me a charming picture. The old couple would decide on Egypt and the Holy Land for their winter cruise, and in the long, cold, winter evenings, seated at a table near, not a fireplace (I saw at a glance that their little parlor would not contain a fireplace) but one of those high,

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shining and most comfortable stoves with countless little isinglass windows and a soothing red glow behind them, they would read aloud, consult maps and pictures and timetables and no doubt disagree very gently here and there as to the proper interpretation of certain passages in the Scriptures. And until the hour arrived for "locking up," for refilling the stove, for seeing that the cat was comfortable for the night and for going to bed, they would actually be in Egypt or the Holy Land—much more so, as the clerk had shrewdly appreciated, than many of the sojourners at Shepherd's Hotel, or the renters of steam dahabêahs on the Nile.

It undoubtedly is one way of traveling, and by no means a bad way. In fact I once came across a little paper in the Contributor's Club of the *Atlantic Monthly* declaring it to be the best way. But then I am convinced that all the contributions to the Contributor's Club of the *Atlantic Monthly* are contributed by very cultivated and cozy, home-loving old maids. Books of travel and portfolios of well-taken

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photographs are the rails upon which the easy chair glides, the unknown sea upon which it so placidly sails. Everyone has made voyages of this kind and, while many of them are uneventful, some of them are thrilling.

The most memorable one (not counting books of adventure which in this connection don't count at all) I ever took was long ago to the Island of Barbados. We were in college at the time and one of the requirements of the advanced English course we were studying was that everybody should write a story in seven chapters—plot, locality and treatment being left to our own discretion. The scene of my narrative (it makes me blush when I recall that little masterpiece of fiction) was in and about Boston, and one bitterly cold sleeting afternoon I asked a friend of mine what he was going to write about. We were in his study at the time and, as he was absorbed at his desk in working out an architectural problem, he merely muttered, with his nose wrinkled up, "Barbados."

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“What are they?” I inquired.

“It isn’t they, it’s it,” he replied; “it’s an island.”

“Where is it?” I asked.

“I really don’t know,” he said.

“But how can you write about it if you don’t know anything about it?” I pursued.

“Why, doesn’t the mere name convey everything to you?” he demanded.

“It conveys,” I told him, “some sort of vegetable. *Do* help yourself to some more of the barbados,” I added.

“To me it means—but let’s go over to the library and get a book about it. I’ve meant to all along, just to see if my idea of it was right,” he suggested. So we went to Gore Hall, where the man at the desk found us a book, and that evening, in front of a grate full of hot, red coal, we went to the Island of Barbados, drinking beer and eating crackers on the way, and also during our residence on the exquisite little island where “the sea assumes strange and unexpected tints; it may be violet, with streaks of lettuce green or forget-

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me-not blue, or may show a stretch of brilliant luster such as shines on a beetle's back, or may shimmer into a lake of lapis lazuli." We stayed on the Island of Barbados until half-past two in the morning. Just recently I returned there one evening in a better book, and if anyone wishes this winter to take a cruise to the West Indies without leaving home, I recommend him to take passage at once on Sir Frederick Treve's recently published "The Cradle of the Deep," one of the most entrancing and beautifully written books of travel of my acquaintance.

As for actual traveling, the kind that necessitates physical as well as mental activity, one great truth about it has at last dawned upon me. No matter what may be your method of procedure, no matter whether your means be modest or unlimited (here, I confess, I am drawing on my imagination), it is always much more comfortable to stay at home. This may sound like an undue emphasis upon an obvious fact, but judging from the number of persons one everywhere meets who do not

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seem to have grasped the fact, I don't believe it is. All over the world, travelers for pleasure continually complain of the hotels, the food, the trains, boats, servants, prices, manners, customs and weather. Almost the entire conversation of a group of fellow countrymen I once met on a steamer consisted of enumerating the things they were going to eat when they arrived in New York. Just recently a friend of mine, who had made a short trip in Mexico, referred with bitterness to that rather primitive country because a bath necessitated going out of his hotel to a bathing establishment. Nothing he saw in Mexico apparently in any way compensated him for this and various other minor discomforts. Without doubt, "be it ever so humble," there is no place like it, and I have often wondered, this being the case, just why we usually do take a trip whenever the opportunity offers itself. What is the psychology of the desire to travel?

With me, at least, I think it arises from the same impulse that prompts one to get up

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and take a walk after one has sat too long in the house. The desire to travel is a kind of desire to stretch the mental legs. There is no essential difference of intent between the little journey "down town" and back, and a journey to Italy or India. During a pleasant, objectless stroll on Main street my mind is in much the same state, although perhaps in a lesser degree, that it is in when I,

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Sometimes the idea of one's entire country becomes even as a long occupied chair in a room, and it is then that, circumstances being propitious, people pack up and flit to lands where everything is different. Having voluntarily sought complete change, it always strikes me as ungrateful and childish to quarrel with it when they get it. If almost everything in a foreign land were not different, travel would begin and end with locomotion, and locomotion is the least of travel.

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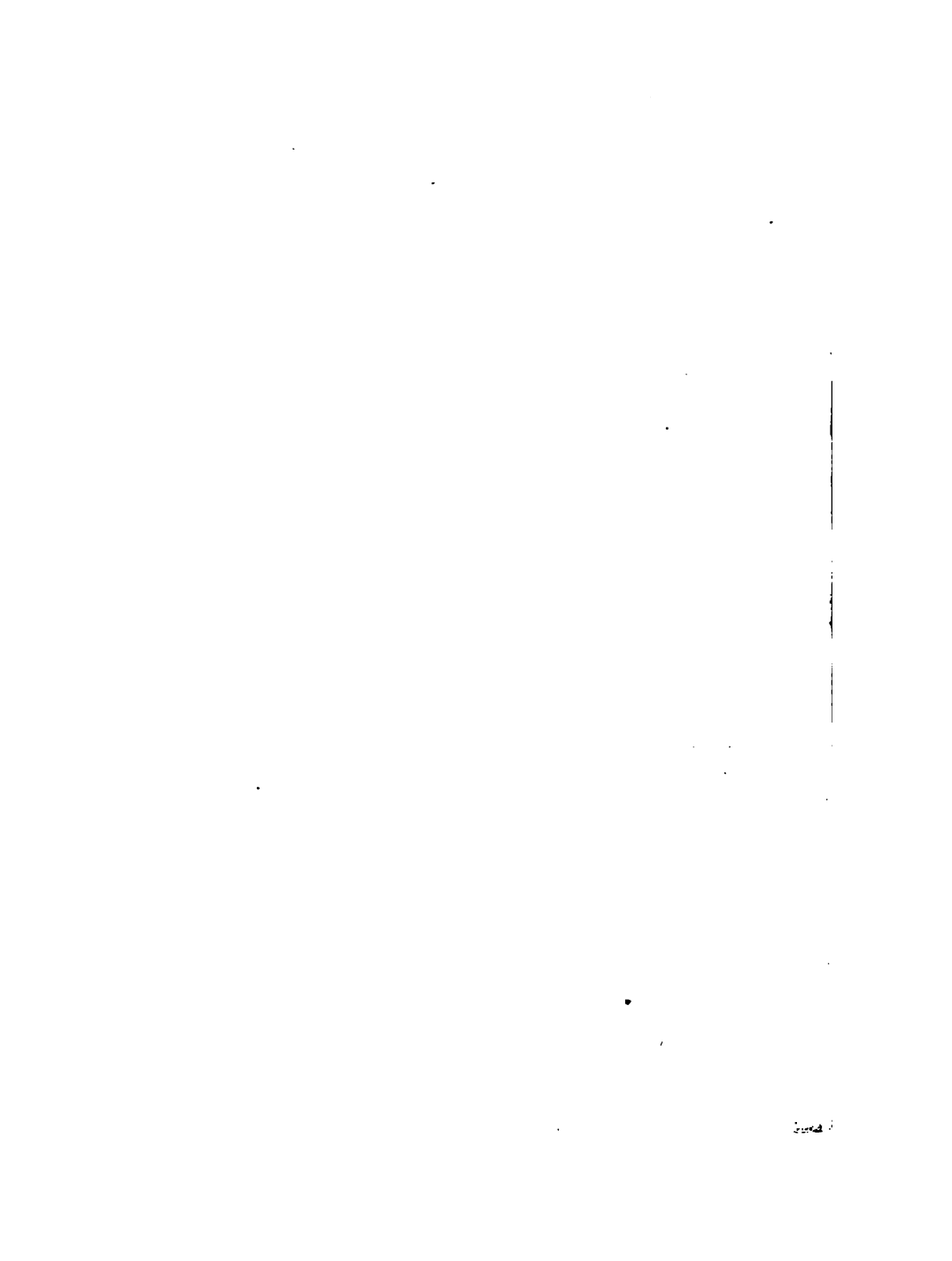
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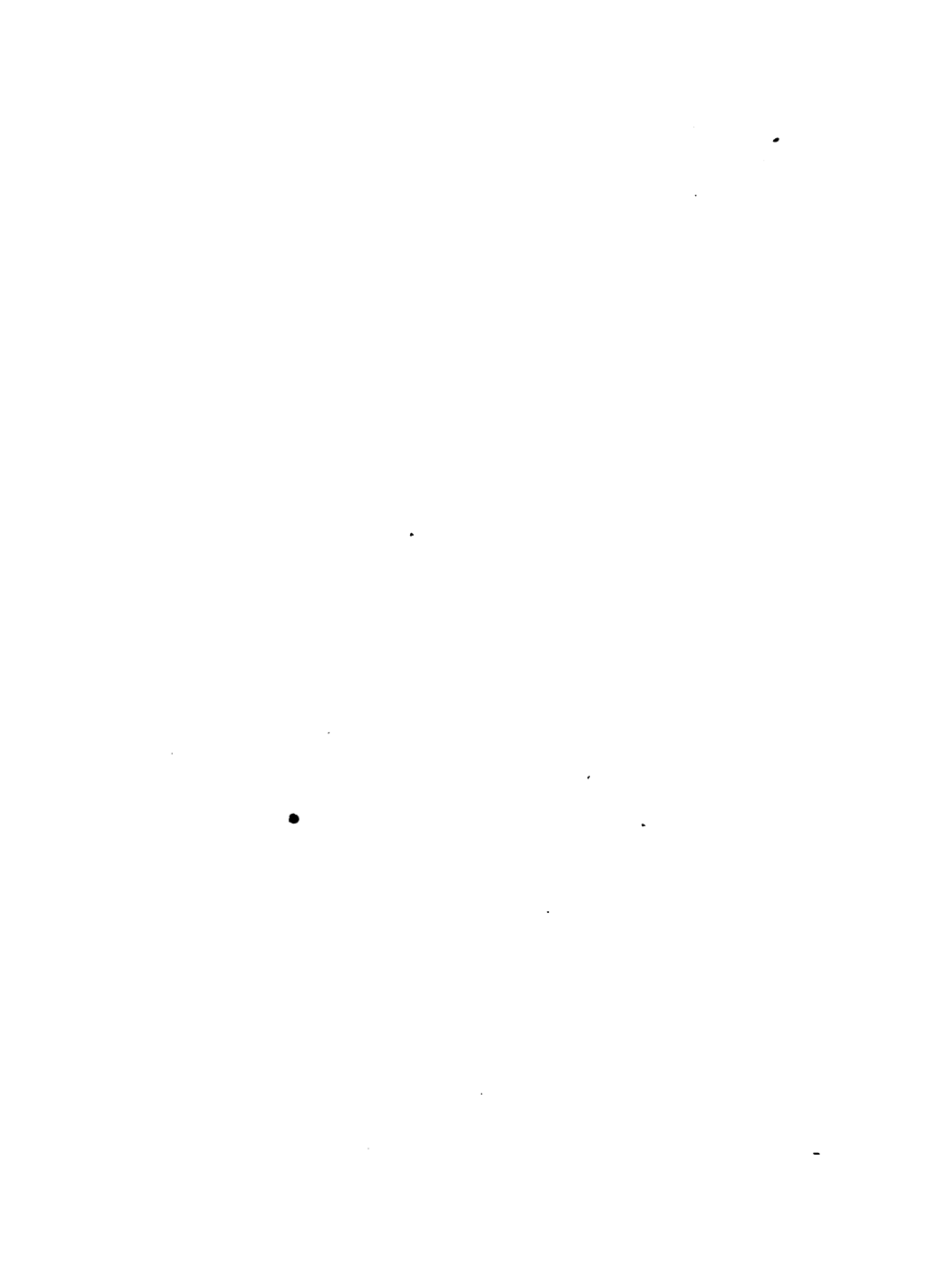
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man has made enough money to live on comfortably they offer him something very definite and delightful to do. He can at any season of the year embark on a "floating hotel" and go to some far-away and interesting part of the world with little or no bother to himself. Just this I notice is what in large numbers he has of late years begun to take advantage of. He and a placid, pleasant wife visit the Mediterranean ports during the winter, investigate the Scandinavian countries, including the North Cape, during the summer, encircle the globe during the greater part of a year, and finally decide to go to South America. Everything is made so easy for him. He lives on the ship during the entire voyage except, perhaps, for a day or so here and there when, for a change, the party stays on shore at a hotel. The necessity of constantly ordering food or struggling with cabmen, waiters and shopkeepers in a foreign language he feels himself too old to learn is agreeably eliminated for him. He comes home with new interests, a widened horizon, refreshed in mind and body

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and usually ready to start out again the next year.

There were many of them on the first South American cruise of last winter, and to me the type was a novel one. For one usually, in a vague sort of a way, thinks of middle-aged Americans traveling in strange countries for the first time as somewhat helpless, often bored, often irritated, uncertain as to where to go and looking forward with relief to the date of sailing homeward. Those I met last winter were anything but that. In a quiet, restful sort of a way they seemed to be thoroughly enjoying themselves. Their attitude toward it all was one of persons who had placed themselves in the hands of what literally was their creator.

It was interesting for the first few days to stretch out on a chair in the sun and, with complete detachment, examine one's fellow passengers as they passed by. One always hears that "a ship is such a good place in which to study human nature." Of course it is. Every place is if one has the eyes and

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ears with which to see and hear it. But I do not believe a ship is particularly so any more. The day for that has passed. People at the present time travel too much to desire to become deeply intimate on short acquaintance. They are too reserved, too experienced. Lifelong friendships, I am inclined to believe, are not often made any more on ocean steamers.

There were one hundred and eighty-one persons in the party, and as they strolled about the deck I discovered myself lazily picking out those I should like, those I "shouldn't mind," those that, through their sheer lack of personality, I should never even see again, and those I should run from. In only a few instances did I make mistakes. One was a bouncing girl with a voice like a symphony of peacocks; she turned out to be agreeable and clever in spite of it. Another was a German who looked like an overfed dachshund and sat opposite me at table; another was an old gentleman who slopped around in carpet slippers (yes, carpet slippers really do still exist). An-

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other was—but why enumerate? Finding out who they all were was the next step.

There was the famous physician; the very grand old dame who held herself much aloof because, before her marriage, she had been one of the Orioles of Baltimore; the lady who cleared about two hundred thousand dollars a year from the sales of a patent fly-paper—or was it a patent flea-powder? I forget—an invention of her late uncle's; the young man who was being sent on the trip because he drank (he certainly did drink; he was drunk for sixteen thousand sea-miles); the "mysterious pair" who concealed their secret to the end; the woman who had written a book; the melancholy man whose wife had just eloped in New York with the chauffeur; and then the numerous nice, quiet, well-mannered persons who, like happy nations, seemed to have no histories in particular.

By the time we had reached the Island of St. Thomas they had all begun to find themselves as well as one another. It was evident that, unconsciously, little groups were form-

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ing; that certain people would ask to be put in the same carriage with certain others; and I think a native drink called a "rum swizzle," of which almost everybody, "just to see what it was like," partook during the day, did not in any way retard the growing acquaintanceships. By the time we arrived at Bahia, our first stopping-place in Brazil, the little groups had more or less assumed their final form. It was a beautiful example of birds of a feather doing just what we have always been told they do. The young girls came together, one could clearly see, chiefly because they all seemed to be engaged in the manufacture of silk neckties; four or five middle-aged ladies found the knitting of fluffy white shawls a convenient and congenial ice-pick; similarity of business interests, past or present, was of course instrumental among many of the men. Books, and there was on board an inexhaustible supply of them, were a tremendous factor in the cementing of friendly relations. By merely glancing at a book some one seemed to be enjoying you usually could tell whether or not you could

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have anything in common. Anybody perusing one of your favorite volumes offered an excuse for stopping and chatting. The insatiable players of bridge were, from the first, so many magnets and poles.

Not among the least important of the passengers were Elizabeth and Peter, the ship's cats. Peter, to the sorrow of the officers who adored him, apparently found friends on the dock at Buenos Aires and disembarked, but Elizabeth, for family reasons, remained with us. She distinguished herself in various ways and on various occasions, three of them being really notable. One night at about two in the morning (always a somewhat Hibernian method of expression) she entered in the dark the deck stateroom of an excitable man of fifty. A steward sent to find her also entered and, in his search, crawled half way under the bed. The excitable man of fifty hearing, or perhaps feeling, some one under his bed and fearing thieves, leaped to the floor, dragged the steward out and heroically struggled with him. As the steward spoke no English and

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the man no German, this duel in the dark continued until the strangulated cries of the former and the appeals for help of the latter brought pretty much every one on that deck to the scene and made it possible to throw some light, electric light, on it. In the meanwhile Elizabeth had strolled away to the cabin of a lady from Argentina, where she proceeded to have five kittens. Then at Pernambuco fifty-six of the passengers rushed ashore and returned, each with a large green parrot. Of course most of them got loose in a few days but were allowed to go pigeon-toeing all over the deck until it was discovered that Elizabeth had quietly chewed the heads off three.

In addition to the parrots and hundreds of other tropical birds, the monkeys, the marmosets and the leopards that the passengers in afterwards to be regretted moments of enthusiasm acquired, the super-alimentated German indulged himself to the extent of a boa constrictor. The first time he went down to feed it, the playful little creature wound itself about his waist in several coils and was

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beginning to constrict in the most successful fashion, when the man's shrieks brought four sailors to the rescue. It took the strength of all of them to untie the knot, so to speak, and had the reptile been able to find anything around which to twist its tail there would have been for the rest of the voyage a vacant seat opposite me at table. Oh, yes, we had some very agreeable fellow passengers.

It was the parrots, I think, that first caused dissension among them. To get loose was to get mixed, and it was a wise owner who knew his own bird, although, unfortunately for the ship's peace, many thought they did. There were claims and counterclaims.

"My parrot had a tail," exclaimed one woman with angry, flashing eyes to another.

"This beastly thing has just bitten my thumb," declared a second; "my own bird never bites. They have made a mistake and I shall complain about it to the company." Still another aggrieved one, who had views different from those of the committee chosen to draw up certain resolutions, let it be known

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that if they did not end by regarding the matter from her point of view she would write to the company saying that the ship was dirty and that the officers had been drinking heavily from beginning to end, which was not only absolutely false but had no relation to the matter in question. It was all very absurd but it also meant that, toward the end of three months on one ship, nerves will be nerves. There were a good many "coolnesses" toward the last, and in the smoking room some angry and bitter words, but on the whole, when we, our parrots and our other "unknown birds of brilliant plumage," filed down the gang plank at Hoboken we were a tolerably good-natured crowd.

Will any of the little groups ever meet again? I often wonder. It seems like something that happened a century ago in a tropical dream.

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

PARENTS AND CHILDREN

WHEN I was considerably younger than I am now, I wrote a story in which appeared the following two sentences: "It always seemed to Haydock that men and women, in becoming parents, somehow or other managed to forfeit a great deal of intelligence. He intended some day to ask a psychologist with children, if it was a provision or a perversion of nature." I wish I had sufficient space in which to reproduce some of the many peevish, sarcastic letters and acrimonious reviews that these two short sentences called forth. For some reason they seemed to hurt feelings and arouse ire (I don't quite know what "ire" means, but it has always seemed to me to be a most attractive little word; so short, and yet so bristling with importance) from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

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People wrote to me in the most curiously unrestrained fashion. One man declared I had deliberately insulted my mother and my father. For some time I was considerably appalled. I began to think that perhaps I had said something juvenile, thoughtless and silly, but since then a good many years have passed, a reaction long since set in and I find that now, even if I am not prepared exactly to stand by my original guns, my position in the matter is at least that of an agnostic. Parents may not necessarily forfeit any part of their intelligence, but, on the other hand, so many of them seem to, that one pauses now and then to speculate on whether, from the evidence, one could not with a little effort deduce a law of nature.

Not having children of my own, I of course indulge in much imaginative bringing up, from the earliest years to the time when they "come out" and become engaged, get married and go to live in Alaska, or Brazil, or Chicago. Naturally, my children are much better brought up than are those of people who actu-

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ally possess them. I admit that in a spectacular sense they don't strike me as having made a very much greater success of their lives, so far, than have their acquaintances who cannot claim the advantage of having me for a parent. They are not particularly rich, although the boys seem to be able to make a respectable and steady living. Only one of the little tribe has as yet an automobile, and she married it, or rather them, as her husband happens to belong to the kind of American family that collects new kinds of motors very much as some persons collect new kinds of picture postal cards. As she is fond of her husband, I don't in the least mind confessing that I am glad he has a lot of money. For, self-reliant and independent as I hope to be to the last, her affluence gives me the comfortable feeling that, no matter what happens, I shall never be a charge on the county or a bother to the good Little Sisters of the Poor. Of course they are all crazy about me, because they realize that everything I did was for the best and that I brought them up so remarkably well.

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But seriously, to go back to my original contention, why is it that many persons who seemed to be endowed with normal intelligence irrevocably mislay it when they begin to beget offspring? They do. I assert, declare and insist that they do. A few evenings ago I went to a dinner, and at about the time the coffee appeared the conversation turned upon this very topic. One of the men said, with emphasis, that he had certain ideas about the bringing up of children. He thought they were good ideas, but his wife almost always opposed them for what, in his opinion, was the most foolish of reasons. He went on shaking a finger at her half in earnest, half in jest. "She often lets the children do things of which I disapprove, because other parents are everywhere letting their children do these things," he said. "Now that to me is no reason at all. I don't care what other parents are allowing their children to do. I know what I want my children to do, and not to do." The wife smiled sweetly and admiringly, and I knew that, when it came to a crisis, she would always

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have her own, possibly misguided, way. She would let her young daughter engage in the various activities her little set happened for the moment to be engaged in, and he, to save discussion, would in the end acquiesce. To me there was here a considerable forfeiture of intelligence on the part of both. The man sacrificed principle to peace, the woman allowed herself to be swayed by perhaps idiotic, if not worse, conventions and fashions for which she secretly did not care. I immediately began to wonder what, under the circumstances, I should do myself. This consideration over a good cigar, while all around me the Ballinger-Pinchot controversy was being threshed out and Dr. Cook was sadly and with genuine regret disposed of, took me far away from the dinner table. I began to think of my own bringing up, of the bringing up of various local families who in the press are usually referred to as "prominent." And the result of the revery seemed to be that although there was no particular scheme of education, no very definite ideas on the subject, children

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in the end seemed to grow up and, as the English say, "muddle through" somehow. But, I found myself inquiring, couldn't there be some way less casual, less haphazard, less at the mercy of the trivial and the contemporaneous? Being a bachelor and knowing nothing whatever about it, I of course feel that there could. To a great extent, the parents I know seem to be lacking in standards; they apparently, from day to day, trust to luck. I am convinced that, if I were blessed with progeny, I should evolve a more definite manual to go by; that my children wouldn't be allowed merely to muddle through as best they could.

In the first place, I should be extremely cautious about their reading. Nothing, after all, is so influential as the printed word. The mere fact that it is printed seems to carry with it a kind of unjustified authority. Why should little boys and little girls have access to our daily papers, full from end to end of horrible crimes, tales of dishonesty in high places and advertisements that cause the mind to reel at their hypocrisy and rottenness? Why should

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they be permitted, when they wish to read, to take from the Public Library the latest best seller because Sissy Jones has just read it and says it is "great"? I should never allow a child of mine to read the daily papers, and I should never allow it to read the thousand and one maudlin children's books that are printed every year at Christmas time. There is no reason whatever why, at an early age, children should not be supplied with good literature just as they are fed nourishing food. And yet, how comparatively few parents think of this in time! They buy for their children trivial, prettily illustrated, altogether unimportant little volumes because they come across them on a counter and because other parents are buying the same things. I shouldn't any more supply a child of mine with this sort of mental slop than I should feed it adulterated milk. Why deliberately give children a taste for the second-rate and third-rate when the first-rate is at hand and they are at an age when they eagerly seize upon anything offered them?

This is a question for which I can think of

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no sensible, logical or respectable answer. Another, to me, absolutely astounding sin of the modern parent is the fashion in which it lets its little girls and boys go to the theater, usually to matinées, regardless of what sort of thing is being performed. The Saturday matinée, apparently, has become an institution, and the child of fourteen or fifteen who is not permitted to buy a box of caramels and sit in the parquet considers himself (much more often herself) a martyr. About six months ago I went to an afternoon performance of "The Merry Widow," simply because the whole world seemed to be talking about it and I had an erroneous idea that I ought for this reason to hear it. The music I had become sick and tired of; the book I found, by the end of the first act, to be hopelessly dull. I had paid two hard-earned dollars for my seat and I stayed to the end, to the scene at Maxim's, which, as done in this country, is one of the most altogether nasty things I have ever sat through in a theater. I happen to have been at Maxim's, on various occasions at every

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hour from seven in the evening until eight the next morning, but I have never seen there anything so common, so indecent, so beastly as the sort of debauch that took place on the stage of our local theaters. Maxim's, as everyone knows, is a fashionable brothel, now owned by an English and American stock company. It pays dividends. But never have I discovered there anything that remotely resembled the sort of performance I saw in the Maxim act of our greatly applauded Savage's "Merry Widow." I mention it at all, only because sitting next to me was a girl of fourteen whom I have known ever since she was born. When the indecency was at its height, when the orgy had reached a climax, she turned to me and said with a sweet enthusiasm, "It's awfully good, isn't it!" Of course she had not the remotest idea of what the affair signified, but why should she have been there in the first place? Why should an American girl of fourteen be introduced to the representation of a Parisian restaurant (to put it most conservatively) represented with infinitely more coarseness

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than is ever found in the original? She was there because her friends, her "set," were there. Mamma, abandoning much of her original intelligence, let her go because Muriel Smith and Gladys Jones and Dorothy Robinson always went to the *matinée* when they wanted to, and their mothers were all women of considerable social importance.

Positively I am aghast when I pause to think of the almost accidental fashion in which so many American children are brought up. Their parents love them and adore them, they do for them everything in the world except what seems to me to be the right thing. Instead of endeavoring to lash them to the good old mast, they have such a way of letting them drift with the contemporary tide! Few things in life are to me at once so engaging, so pathetic and so repellent as a street-car load of boys and girls who have just come from the high school; the girls with their pompadours and their rats, their Latin grammars, their giggling and their ogling; the boys, nice boys, but with such grotesque trousers, flashy shoes

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and absurd hats. Why doesn't some one in authority give them less objectionable ideas on the subject of dress, of conduct, of, in short, life? They are really the most dreadful, trashy, tiresome little creatures. It is a constant marvel to me that so many of them, in a few years, without parental or outside aid, abandon their revolting ways and become perfectly good men and women. I admit with gladness that we do seem somehow to muddle through.

Wouldn't it, however, be better if children were brought up as my suppositious infants are brought up? Or would it in the long run make any particular difference? In the first place, the mother of my children doesn't spend entire days at country clubs or the houses of friends playing bridge whist. She stays at home a good deal and plays with the children instead, because she likes to and because they like to have her. Few sights are more depressing, give one a more nauseating sensation, cause one to form a lower estimate of humanity, than a roomful of overdressed American

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mothers hectically playing bridge; and it is a sight one may see almost every day in the year from one end of the country to the other.

In the second place, why should children be allowed to stuff their little insides with candy merely because they seem to like it? A southern cousin of mine used to pick out the best pieces in a box of candy and eat them himself, remarking, "We shall leave the hair-oil and lip-salve varieties for the children, as all children are natural scavengers." This may be true, but I should protest vehemently against their being allowed to scavenge. That children should be permitted to ruin their digestions, that they should ever be given any form of food that isn't good for them, strikes me as a parental crime. Parents have the entire matter in their hands; they are, or ought to be, the supreme court, the law. Why not decide for the best instead of for the slipshod half way, or the worst?

Thirdly, I endeavor to give the little creatures for whom I am imaginatively responsible, in addition to robust health, which, after all,

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one is often inclined to consider the main, the only thing, certain intellectual resources that, even should their health fail later on, they can fall back upon with much enjoyment; resources that later on it is difficult to acquire for oneself. I like them to have an acquaintance with the best books and the greatest pictures, to know just why they are good and great even if they have not actually seen them. I also endeavor to give them a practical knowledge of at least two languages not their own. Every child in our high schools makes a futile stab at French or German. How few make of them a precious possession! As one grows older there is almost no pleasure greater than the ability to read with ease a book in a foreign language; to realize that, while the medium is different, the humanity underlying it is the same. An understanding of foreign languages, more than anything else, helps on the universal brotherhood of man.

Fourthly, I never allow my children to go to the theater because Sissy Jones is allowed to go. Now and then something locally hap-

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pens that strikes me as amusing, or instructive or, happily, both. We then all go and have a grand time. But why should they be allowed to form the habit of going to everything that comes along? At the dinner to which I have referred, an Irish woman told me she had never been inside of a theater until after her marriage, and she is one of the most charming, highly educated, cultivated women of my acquaintance.

But no doubt my jewels will after all, in spite of me, be the same source of mixed pleasure and responsibility that most jewelry is.

WHAT IS EDUCATION?



WHAT IS EDUCATION?

BOOKS, the titles of which are interrogatory, always have a fascination for me. "What is Ibsenism?" "Can You Forgive Her?" "What Shall We Do With Our Girls?" for instance. Of course, they are invariably unsatisfactory and, sometimes, exasperating. They never really answer the questions they propound, and they leave one somewhat more muddled than one was before. Tolstoi's "What is Art?" is a most bigoted and tedious performance. In it one of the greatest artists of modern times elaborately tells one nothing whatever about art, and leaves one with the impression that his claim on immortality is something of which he has become very much ashamed. But, crafty old person though I be, I succumb to them all, and read them because I can't resist a title in the form of a question.

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At present, I am longing for someone to write a book and call it "What Is Education?" What, as a matter of fact, *is* education? Every few days someone, in endeavoring to describe and sum up someone else, ends with the clinching statement: "And the strange part of it was that he was a man, or she was a woman, of education." This is supposed to settle the matter—to arouse in one's mind a definite image. "He was a man of education," apparently means something, but what? To me it has come to mean nothing at all. A short time ago I read in the morning paper of a dead body that had been found in the river and taken to the county morgue. "All means of identification had been removed," wrote the reporter, in commenting on the incident, "but," he added, "the body was evidently that of a man of education." And, to me, the remarkable part of this was that the reporter, without doubt, had a hazy idea of what he was trying to express. In the poor, dead, unidentified thing he had discovered and recognized something that, to him, implied

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“education,” but how he did it, and what it was, I don’t know, because he did not explain. There are in this connection all sorts of questions I hope the author of the book, to which I look forward, will answer. Is, for instance, “a man of education” the same as “an educated man”? Or is one, perhaps, somewhat more—well, more educated than the other? At times both these phrases sound to me as if they meant precisely the same thing, and then again they suddenly, through no wish of mine, develop subtle but important differences that cause first the one and then the other to seem expressive of a higher, a more comprehensive, form of education. Then, too, is there any particular point at which education leaves off and “cultivation” begins? And can a person be “cultivated” without being educated? The words education and cultivation are constantly upon the American tongue, but what do they mean? Or, do they mean something entirely different to everyone who employs them? Every American girl who flirts her way through the high school is “edu-

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cated," and it would be indeed a brave man who dared to suggest that she wasn't. But is she? (Heaven forbid that *I* should suggest anything; I merely crave information.) And here let me hasten to add that a friend of mine has always maintained, quite seriously, that he likes me in spite of the fact that I am, as he expresses it, "one of the most illiterate persons" of his acquaintance. His acquaintance, it is some slight comfort to remember, is not large, and he is a doctor of philosophy who lectures at one of the great English universities. Not only has he read and studied much, his memory is appalling; he has never forgotten anything. From his point of view I am not "an educated person." But then, in the opinion of Macaulay, Addison was sadly lacking in cultivation! "He does not appear to have attained more than an ordinary acquaintance with the political and moral writers of Rome; nor was his own Latin prose by any means equal to his Latin verse," Macaulay complains in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1843. And while Macaulay admits that "Great

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praise is due to the notes which Addison appended to his version of the second and third books of the *Metamorphoses*," and confess them to be "rich in apposite references to Virgil, Stetius and Claudian," he cannot understand anyone's failing to allude to Euripides and Theocritus, waxes indignant over the fact that Addison quoted more from Ausonius and Manilius than from Cicero, and feels positively hurt at his having cited "the languid hexameters of Silius Italicus," rather than the "authentic narrative of Polybius." In Rome and Florence—Macaulay continues, more in sorrow than in anger—Addison saw all the best ancient works of art, "without recalling one single verse of Pindar, of Callimachus, or of the Attic dramatists."

Of course all this is very sad and leaves us quite cross with Addison for having deluded us into believing him to be a person of considerable erudition. How *could* anybody in the presence of a statue be so absent-minded as not to recall a single verse of Pindar or Callimachus? And how hopelessly superficial

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must be the mind that actually prefers the languid hexameters of Silius Italicus to the authentic narrative of Polybius! Yet, on the other hand, if we casually referred to Polybius while conversing with most of our educated and even so-called cultivated acquaintances, how many of them, I wonder, would know whether we were talking about a Greek historian or a patent medicine. Macaulay would have considered them hopeless; we (and they) are in the habit (perhaps it is a very bad habit—I don't know) of regarding them as educated.

Another question that my suppositious author must devote a chapter to, is the difference between just an education and a "liberal" education. We used to hear much more about a "liberal" education than we do now, although Prexy Eliot has of late endeavored to restore the phrase as well as the thing itself. When does an education leave off being penurious, so to speak, and become liberal? According to Mr. Eliot, Milton's "Areopagitica" helps a lot. I once read Milton's "Areopagi-

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tica" ("but not for love") with great care, and when I had finished it I had to procure at much trouble and expense another book (written some hundreds of years later) that told me what it was all about. The next day I passed an examination in the subject—and to-day I couldn't, if my life were at stake, recall the nature or the purpose of the work in question or even explain the meaning of the title. It is possible, of course, that this is more my fault than Milton's, but whoever is to blame, I can truthfully say that never before or since have I read anything so completely uninteresting or that contributed so little to the liberality of my education. In Mr. Eliot's opinion, however, and no one more firmly believes in the soundness of Mr. Eliot's opinions than I do, this ghastly, unintelligible, jaw-breaking relic of the seventeenth century is, if not absolutely essential to a liberal education, at least highly conducive to one. What on earth does it all signify?

Some persons pin their entire faith to a correct use of the pronouns *I* and *me*. They

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cheerfully commit every other form of linguistic violence, but as long as they can preserve sufficient presence of mind boldly to say once in so often something like, "He left James and me behind," instead of resorting to the cowardly "James and myself," or the elegantly ungrammatical "James and I," they feel that their educational integrity has been preserved. Others believe that education and true refinement begin and end with always saying, "You would better," instead of "You had better," while Mr. Eliot, in musing on the career of Mr. Roosevelt, no doubt remarks to himself, "An estimable, even an interesting man, but is he, after all, conversant with the 'Areopagitica'?" (I hate to admit it, but I think it highly probable that he is.) And Macaulay, in the book review from which I have quoted, disposes once and for all of a certain scholar named Blackmore—rips open his intellectual back, in fact, by stating with dignified disgust: "Of Blackmore's attainments in the ancient tongues, it may be sufficient to say that, in his prose, he has confounded an apho-

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rism with an apothegm." Isn't it all wonderful? And doesn't it make you wish that someone would write a work called, "What Is Education?" so you could find out whether you were educated or not?

Of late I have begun to have an ineradical conviction that I am not—and this, not because I have a perverse fondness for the "languid" vocabulary of Silius Italicus (of whom, of course, I never had heard) but because I apparently know so little about the idiom that, by inheritance and environment, I am privileged to call my own. Not long ago, in reading a passage of excellent English prose, I came across a word that suddenly, as words have a devilish way of doing, stood out from the page and challenged me. The word was "nadir." "At this period he was at the nadir of his fortunes," was, I think, the sentence in which it occurred, and from the context I was able to divine not the exact meaning of the term, but the general idea it expressed. It meant, I could see, that the person in question had experienced a run of bad luck, that his af-

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fairs, for the time being, were in anything but a prosperous condition. But this was very far from knowing the specific meaning of the word "nadir." It was obviously a noun, and a simple-looking little creature at that, yet I neither knew how to pronounce it nor what it meant. So I made a note of it, intending, later, to inform myself. Further on, I came to the word "apogee," a familiar combination of letters that suddenly appeared to be perfectly absurd. The gentleman referred to was now no longer at the nadir of his fortunes—he was at the "apogee" of them, and, of course, I was able to guess that something agreeable had happened to him of late. But what, after all, was an apogee? I had often read the word before, and I feel sure that it may be found here and there among my "complete works," employed with an air of authority. But, upon my soul, I didn't know what it meant, and, therefore, virtuously made another little note.

Once started upon this mad career of disillusionment, there seemed to be absolutely no end to it, and I read on and on, no longer for

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the pleasure of reading, but more because the book had become like one of those electric machines with metal handles, where, after turning on the current with a cent, you hang on in interesting agony because you can't let go. "Not one jot nor tittle!" I groaned as I wrote it down. "Jot," as a verb, conveyed something to me, but what was it when it became a noun? And what sort of a thing, for heaven's sake, was a "tittle"? It sounded more like a kitchen utensil than anything else. (Polly, put the tittle on— No, that wouldn't do.) And why, also, were jots and tittles such inseparable companions? In all my life I had never met a solitary tittle—a tittle walking about alone, so to speak, unaccompanied by a devoted jot. Why was it that when I did meet them, hand in hand, as usual, I didn't know what they were?

By this time I was beginning to be verbally groggy. What, I wondered, was—or, rather, wasn't—"a scintilla of evidence"? (For, oddly enough, one is never informed that there *is* a scintilla of evidence, but merely that there

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isn't.) And just how did it happen, in the first place, that a lack of evidence should have been called a "scintilla," whereas a certain kind of expensive gray fur was called a "chinchilla." Scintilla chinchilla, scintilla chinchilla—the jury was unable to find a chinchilla of evidence, although Mrs. Vasterbolt was present at the trial in a handsome coat of the costliest scintilla. Why not? But as madness seemed to be lurking in that direction, I hastened feverishly on to "adamant." Oh, yes, I know it's something very hard and unyielding and, in the kind of novels that no one reads any more, someone is, at a critical moment, always "as" it—never "like" it. But what is it? It might be some sort of a mythological cliff against which people were supposed ineffectually to have hurled themselves; it might be a kind of metal, or a particularly durable precious stone, or a satisfactory species of paving material. It might be any old thing; I don't know. What in the dickens does it mean to "dree your own weird"? For, as I almost tore off a page in my anxiety to turn it, my

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eyes caught sight of: “ ‘ Everyone must dree his own weird,’ she answered, sententiously.” Early in life it had dawned on me that to be told you must “ dree your own weird ” was merely a more obscure and delicate fashion of telling you that you must “ skin your own skunk ”; and yet I very much doubt if the verb “ to dree ” means to skin, or if “ weird,” used as a noun, has much connection with the fragrant little denizen of our forests whom we all, I trust, are accustomed to refer to as the *mephitis Americana*.

On and on I toiled for another hour, at the end of which time I had a formidable list of ordinary words belonging to my own language, as to whose real meaning I was completely in the dark. To-day I intended to look them all up and write a charming little paper on them, primarily designed, of course, to make dear reader gasp at the scope and thoroughness of my education. But the day is indescribably hot, and, as I have been away, my dictionary, unfortunately, is gritty with dust. To get up and slap at the corpulent

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thing with a damp towel would be most repulsive. I shan't do it. Instead I shall recall that the most intellectual nation in the world has a saying to the effect that, "*On peut être fort instruit sans avoir d'éducation.*"

JUST A LETTER



JUST A LETTER

THE other day I received a letter from an old friend of mine with whom I have talked for many years now, only in long letters at long intervals. He is a man of about thirty-seven, but he still writes long letters. This one, like all the others, is pleasant in spots, and I have therefore submitted it to a sort of epistolary, dry-cleaning process and extracted some of the spots. Here they are:—

As you see, I am at Newport. I have been visiting various persons here for almost a month now, and as the glory will have soon departed, or rather, as *I* shall have soon departed, I thought I should give you a vicarious whiff of high life while I can:

It is a rather hot day for Newport, but in this vast and lovely room, at a long window opening on a cliff covered with mauve heather,



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and with the sea beyond, I don't in the least mind. I don't think I should mind anything very much. I don't even mind that just outside a man is pushing a lawn mower back and forth on the faultless turf, although the sound of his performance makes me feel as if all my teeth were loose. They probably are. Indeed, after a dinner, a late dance, and the remaining few hours of last night spent in playing bridge, my fearless little mirror tells me this morning that I look quite all of twenty-six. One hears much about the follies of the rich, but I am beginning to feel that they are as nothing compared to the follies of the poor. For the paltry sum I last night lost to a man worth eighteen or twenty millions is almost the exact sum I meant to distribute among the servants of my hostess when I gracefully make room for somebody else on the day after to-morrow. Before I began to write to you, I made no end of hectic little calculations on the back of an envelope, but as yet they don't seem to be leading me anywhere except into the hands of a receiver. However—

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I've had an exceedingly good time here. Theoretically, a person who leads the kind of life I do ought to have spent his vacation otherwise. I know that if I had consulted the oracles who answer "Troubled Subscriber," they, one and all, would have answered, "Get out into the open, or the cool, quiet depths of the forest. Get into touch with Mother Nature and commune with her. Her bosom is large (and covered with ants). She loves her tired children." But I did nothing of the sort. Instead of getting into the forest, I got into the cool, quiet depths of a sea-going automobile, with a handful of orchids swaying in a glass-and-silver vase in front of me, and came to Newport. What I needed just then was not taking long tramps and cooking my own indigestible meals in a frying pan, reposing on a lumpy heap of pine needles and getting drowned every other night at half-past eleven, anointing mosquito bites and falling over logs. Not a bit of it. I yearned instead for an exquisite bedroom and salon overhanging a sapphire and diamond sea, a young man—whose

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very presence created a deeper silence—to wake me in the morning, to draw a bath, to lay out my clothes, to bring me my breakfast on china that had once belonged to Madame de Pompadour. I wanted to arise late and mingle with perfectly dressed, good-looking, agreeable people, who seemed to be enjoying themselves and who, if they ever did have annoying, serious or sad moments, never let one know about it. I wanted to go to large, gay luncheons at half-past two, and larger, gayer dinners at half-past eight or nine, with golf and rides and drives, and other people and tea in between. I wanted to see lots of young girls who looked like hot-house flowers and who would decide to be charming to me because they knew that *I* knew it would be out of the question to try to marry them, and I wanted to talk to incredibly youthful looking old women with marvelously arranged, dyed hair, high diamond collars to conceal the wattles, and ropes of pearls, with which to run through nervous, jeweled fingers.

Well, all this I have done and seen for a

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month now, and, as I said, I have greatly enjoyed myself. I suppose you know, of course, that Newport, Rhode Island, does not, in the least, resemble the Newport that the American people read about in newspapers—that the Newport of the newspapers does not, in fact, exist. To multitudes of our fellow countrymen this would be not only unwelcome, but incredible news. Yet it is a curious truth. The great American people (dear, old, great, American people!) like to think of this extraordinarily healthful and beautiful spot as being, at the worst, a kind of dazzling den of vice, and, at the best, a resort where semi-idiotic families possessing great wealth may, with impunity, concoct grotesque and vulgar—and ever more vulgar—diversions for all the rest of our completely moral, intellectual, high-minded and desirable population to sneer at. Around the mythical Newport of editors and reporters has grown a tradition and a stock of phrases that the country at large eagerly swallows whole. I don't suppose there is a paragrapher in any state of the Union who

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could possibly grind out four lines about Newport without employing the words "monkey dinner," although there has never been such a thing as a monkey dinner at Newport (whatever a monkey dinner may be), and nobody who lives and entertains here in summer has the slightest idea of what the thing means. Originally, no doubt, the fiction of a rectorial mind, it has become, through repetition and the course of time, as much of an established fact to the nation as the Washington monument or the Civil War.

The country in general believes, I am sure, that a dinner party here is merely a euphonious term for a debauch—but, of course, you know as well as I do that a Newport dinner resembles precisely a similar festivity everywhere else in the world where there is great wealth and the strange state of mind known as "fashion." Here there is sometimes—often, perhaps,—rather too much pomp and circumstance, more servants and American beauties and jewels than the particular occasion justifies. In Europe I have dined at

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great embassies in the company of famous and important personages, with far less fuss, feathers and war paint than I have been accustomed to during the past month, when I would diné, for instance, with a man whose father had amassed millions from ready-made clothing, and whose party consisted of a few of his equally unimportant acquaintances. The whole thing (given the kind of thing) is, without question, very perfectly and beautifully done; but equally without question it is, most of the time, very much overdone. It has so often occurred to me as I made myself agreeable to the skinny, be-powdered nakedness of the lady next to me (maybe you don't know it, but I have a reputation for an ability to amuse any woman who has passed the age of sixty-five, and I, therefore, always take in someone who looks like the galvanized remains of Rameses II), that there was no real, no justifiable reason for so much formality and splendor. There really isn't, you know. It is not at all as it is in England, for example, where political ambitions must be

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furthered and the prestige of great and ancient names maintained. Here there are widely known names (that of my last night's hostess may be seen over the entrance of a large and bad hotel), but they are neither great nor what one is accustomed to consider ancient; and as for politics, when politics become necessary to these people, they merely, and with a light heart, hire a United States senator to do whatever dirty work the situation demands. Splendor here is indulged in purely for its own sake. There is absolutely nothing behind it except unlimited means.

But, even so, neither the "entertainments" nor the persons who give them, are at all like the nation's fixed idea of them. The former, if you like, are unnecessary and super-elaborate, but they are always beautiful in their way, and decorous; the latter, more often than not, are extremely interesting and often charming. Why shouldn't they be? For daily, since I have been here, it has come over me with a sense of having discovered the fact that "human nature is pretty much the same every-

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where." There are intelligent, clever, sympathetic, altogether delightful men and women here, and also men and women who are, by nature, dull, narrow, tiresome or common, just as there are in every habitable region of the globe. But stupidity for stupidity, commonness for commonness, bore for bore, I confess that the stupid, common bore of these regions is much less wearisome than he is in regions less splendid. He (or she) has in his favor all sorts of things that, while they do not make him interesting or worth one's time, at least furnish him with a variety of avenues of approach—if you know what I mean. Essentially limited though he be, as far as his intellect and sympathies are concerned, mere sordid wealth had usually forced upon him certain contacts and habits and experiences that you can understand and can talk about. There is about him, somewhere, a neutral ground on which for the time being you can get together in a way you simply can't with the same sort of nonentity who has not been subjected to the same sort of influences. Stupidity for stu-

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pidity, commonness for commonness, bore for bore, I, after all, prefer that of Newport to that of Saugdunk, Maine, or Pekin, Kansas. In the long run, of course, they are both exactly the same, and both very awful. The difference between them is the difference between taking a dose of castor oil enveloped in an expensive capsule and taking it straight.

I like many of the people I have met here more than I can tell you, but late at night, sometimes, alone in my always monotonously perfect bedroom, when all through the house not a creature is stirring, not even a—valet, I often giggle at the abysmal difference between us. And in spite of all their hospitality and millions, the laugh, I must colloquially confess, is on them. For although I am perfectly capable of meeting them on *their* ground, they could not possibly meet me on mine. From earliest childhood our influences and training have been as far apart as the poles, but I consider mine by far the more important and valuable; for, when I feel like it, I can go into society, while they have no idea at

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all of the relief and delight of getting out of it. They know their own side of life, but I am perfectly conversant with theirs and several others as well. When I am with them I can do all of their stunts just as well as they do them themselves, but I know, somewhere in the back of my head, that they couldn't do any of mine. I don't despise them or look down on them for this, but I do, every now and then, feel awfully sorry for them—regret for them the things they have missed and are missing. “Just what does he mean by that?” I think I can see you wonder.

Well, I mean all sorts of things, and for the most part they are, no doubt, absurd and incommunicable. I mean, for instance, that I know all about their fussy, tedious, proper, little childhoods, and that they do not know, and never will know, anything about mine. In my opinion, their childhood was a decorous tragedy; in their opinion, if they learned about it, mine would be a sensational scandal. In New York it always gives me a queer, asphyxiated feeling when I see pretty, expensively

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dressed little boys walking for exercise on upper Fifth avenue in charge of a maid or a footman, or being transported in an automobile or a victoria for an hour's "romp" in the park. And here at Newport I have overheard little girls discussing with acuteness and authority the probable length of time it would take the lady who has rented the palace next door to arrive at the goal of her social ambitions.

My own childhood was so wonderfully casual and different! We lived on the outskirts of a small northwestern city—not in the country exactly, and not exactly in the slums. In those days the place had no slums, but it had outlying, semi-rural tracts where poor people built shanties and "squatted." My parents neither built a shanty nor squatted, but they built a house that from time to time grew and rambled, and they lived there. They were able to live where they pleased, because in the community they were persons of importance. I, however, was not, and as children, especially boys, always play with the most available other

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children, unless they are told not to (and even then sometimes), and as I was never told not to, my only boy companions and intimate friends, until I was fourteen, were the boys of our neighborhood. At that time they were known to the élite as "the Elm street gang." The ungraded road on which our house was situated had been named, with the usual subtlety of municipal authorities, "Elm Street," because all of its trees were either scrub oak or maple. They were "the Elm street gang" in those days; to-day they would merely be known as "muckers." It was with them that all my early years were spent, both in school and out. For at that time, if I remember rightly, the parochial schools (all my friends were Irish Roman Catholics) did not catch their pupils as young as they do now, and we all went to a yellow brick schoolhouse named after a Democratic president.

To you it may not seem to be a matter of importance that until I was fourteen my only playmates and dearest friends were Irish muckers. To me it is of a significance that

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I could scarcely explain. For at an impressionable age I not only lived my own life—the life I was born to—in my own house and family, but quite as naturally and sincerely I lived the life of an Irish mucker. (This, to me, sounds like an unappreciative, a clumsy, almost a brutal way of stating it, but if I expressed it otherwise you probably wouldn't understand.) I knew their families and loved them. I used to share not only their meals when I felt like it (they always tasted much better than our own), but their sorrows and their joys. Elm street and vicinity in those days was a little segment lifted in its entirety from the bogs of Ireland and set down in the Northwest, and, as I lived there, I very early in life became intimate with poverty, drunkenness and death. Before I was twelve I had sat in a whitewashed room with a drowned boy, discussing with his family what they could most advantageously sell or pawn in order to pay for the expense of a funeral. And, oh! the wakes. We had wakes on Elm street; real ones; the kind that nowadays take place only

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in Irish fiction. And I used to go to them because they were the wakes of persons I had known, and, in a childish way, cared for. After twenty-four years I can still recall the final expression of certain pallid, waxen faces, and white, crossed, emaciated hands. They used to "keen," just as they do, no doubt, in some parts of Ireland to-day, and it was Mrs. Smith who always started it. To you "Mrs. Smith" may sound somewhat vague, but there was only one Mrs. Smith at that time. She was a supernaturally old woman, who always wore a kind of semi-sunbonnet of frilled white linen and devoted most of her time to a flock of geese. Through her the torch, so to speak, had been handed down. After her death there was no more keening.

But, of course, it wasn't all wakes. On Sunday morning I used to go up to the Hogans where Mame was preparing dinner while the rest of the family were at mass. At that time I looked upon Mame as grown up, even old; but she couldn't have been more than sixteen. The Hogans had a wonderful

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vegetable garden, and while the family was at church, Mame and I would pull up carrots and beets, pick peas and beans, gather ears of corn, snip off sprigs of parsley, prepare them all, and then dump them into a rotund iron pot on the stove with a chunk of meat. After that we would sit down outside of the shanty and talk. I forget now what we talked about, but it must have been absorbing to me, because I was always still there when Mrs. Hogan creaked up the hill in her Sunday black, and I usually stayed for the soup. Never in this world will soup again taste like that.

I knew these people intimately, and in a queer sort of way felt that I was one of them. The opulent and well-dressed boys of the place always avoided Elm street. They were desperately afraid of the locality, and with reason. For there was a perpetual rumor abroad that the elm street gang hated the "Yanks,"—as the nicely dressed, male offspring of the fashionable districts were called by us. As I look back on it all I think we did hate them—I, almost as heartily as the rest. Then arrived the

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inevitable time when I acquired a bicycle, and the "Yanks" (I can't imagine why) invited me to become a member of their bicycle club. I accepted, and from that time on I was "in society." But I shall never forget the first meeting of the bicycle club in front of our house when my old friends gathered to see the start, and I felt like a renegade, a sneak and a traitor. Even now I can remember some of the scathing and picturesquely blasphemous comments made on that occasion by the gang.

My old friends have never forgotten me and I have never forgotten them. Some of them are far from being desirable citizens, and spend much of their time in the workhouse. Others of them have become part of the valuable thing we call "the backbone of the nation." In this they all do not differ very widely from some of my acquaintances more recently acquired, except that whereas the former *are* in the workhouse, the latter merely ought to be.

But I don't see why I should be bombarding you with these reminiscences. Perhaps,

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after all, you won't see what they always mean to me, and particularly here, in this wondrously unreal environment, where the "other half" is something one merely subscribes to, or occasionally reads about in a magazine. But, you see, I *know* the other half; at one period of my life I actually *was* the other half. And when I confess to my skinny old dinner companion that I don't like truffles and loathe champagne, I have the most irrelevant visions. They make a snob of me, these visions; not a snob in the general acceptance of the term, but a snob, none the less. For I continually feel that I know more about life than these people know, or ever will know. It is a source of satisfaction that I can see all around them while they are able to see only the particular front I, for the moment, wish to display. If I could choose between millions and my memories of Elm street, I think I should cling to Elm street.

* * * * *

That, practically, was the letter. It was pleasant in spots. I have tried, as I said, to extract some of the spots.

IN THE UNDERTAKER'S
SHOP



IN THE UNDERTAKER'S SHOP

SOME time ago I went down town to buy a coffin. No, I didn't say that to be startling; it is merely a bald, literal statement of fact. Now and then one goes down town to buy a book, or a pair of gloves, or some postage stamps. On this occasion I went to buy a coffin.

The conventional idea of grief is that it is an exclusive emotion; that it leaves no room in the mind, for the time being, for any other. Like most of our beliefs, and most of them are erroneous, we have derived this one from books and newspapers. "Mrs. So-and-so bore up bravely to the end, but is now under the care of a physician, and is completely prostrated by grief," one almost always reads in a newspaper account of the last hours of that altogether estimable citizen, her husband. And she sincerely believes this—believes it even

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while she stands in front of the glass, telling the young woman from the dry-goods shop that the veil hasn't been pinned on straight and that the skirt is at least three inches too long in the back. There is no hypocrisy here; she does feel acutely and deeply bereaved. But she is by no means completely prostrated, and there is plenty of place in her intelligence for a variety of sensations that have little or nothing to do with her sorrow. In fact, physicians tell me that persons in ordinary "good health" are very rarely prostrated by grief; that when they are, complete prostration, on the part of gentlemen, is generally traceable to too many drinks of whisky, and on the part of ladies, to the morphine pill of the family doctor.

Some persons are so constituted that even in the case of their own trouble they can appreciate this; other persons can't. I happen to be one of the kind who can, so when I went into the undertaker's shop, it was, after the first rather dreadful moment, easy and natural for me to regard the place and what I saw and heard there impersonally and with interest.

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This was the less difficult, perhaps, from the fact that for several minutes I was alone, there was no one to attend to me and I had time to sit down and look about me—to collect myself and begin to wonder why the person whose establishment it was, was called an “undertaker,” in the first place. It is really a comic, a grotesque word, whether it means that the man to whom it applies merely “undertakes” in a general sense, or more specifically, undertakes to take one under. I decided to look this matter up in a dictionary when I went home, but I neglected to, of course, and it is still one of those philological mysteries through which we write and speak and have our being. I had time also to discover just why these places, quite aside from their associations, are in themselves always so hideous, so offensive, so utterly repellent. It is simply because they express in terms of furniture the characteristics and point of view of the always very unpleasant persons who conduct them. A being from another planet ought to be able to reconstruct an American undertaker merely by

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examining the furniture of the front room in which he transacts his business.

The locale of other trades and professions usually expresses some one thing, and nothing else. The offices of lawyers, stockbrokers and architects, for instance, suggest only the law, finance and construction. There is about them an intelligible directness, an admirable singleness of purpose. You know just where you are, and they admit of no emotional intricacies between you and the men you consult there. An undertaker's office, on the other hand, is a piece of elaborate hypocrisy. It deprecatingly shrinks from admitting that it is one thing or the other. Over one of the most rapacious trades in all this sad world it seeks to draw a veil of domesticity and religion. One is repelled by the place because it is so deliberately false.

In it there is always the apparatus of business—telephones and a roll-top desk full of billheads and ledgers and writing materials. That corner of the room is practical to a degree. But there are always, as well, several rocking-chairs with "tidies," half a dozen

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dreary palms and ferns, a few pictures of a semi-devotional nature in somber frames, and, if it can possibly be managed, an imitation stained-glass window. The rocking-chairs, the tidies, the dusty green things, the pictures, the colored glass are there to "soften the blow," to extend a kind of mute sympathy, to make you feel that your relations with the place are not entirely sordid and commercial. On a table there is literature, but lest it should strike in one's affliction a false and jarring note, it is invariably confined to last year's reports, bound in dark-gray paper, of the trustees of local cemeteries. To one's intelligence it is all very insulting.

So, also, was the manner of the abhorrent young man who presently appeared through a curtained doorway in the rear of the particular establishment I happened to be visiting. In the room beyond he had been whistling, as he approached, a popular two-step, but he instantly ceased when he saw me and unconsciously drawing his face into a wan, smitten smile, came forward noiselessly, almost on tip-

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toe. He would have shaken hands with a slight, prolonged pressure full of regret and comprehension if I had let him, but I saw it coming and putting my hand in my pocket allowed him to drop back with a sad gesture that sought to say: "Yes—yes, I understand."

"I should like to look at coffins," I remarked, and then coldly eyed his discomfiture. For it was clearly not the sort of beginning he had expected. I had been prosaic and unmoved, and the fact left him for a moment with his trained sympathy, his professional manner, on his hands so to speak. He didn't exactly know what to do with it, and he couldn't quite bring himself, all at once, to risk anything else. In the meantime I merely looked at him.

"Mr. Murksom" (Mr. Murksom was the proprietor; they always have names like that) "has stepped out for a few minutes, but he's coming right back," the young man at last explained in tones that tried to be commonplace like my own. But I could see how difficult it was for him to *be* commonplace under the cir-

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cumstances. Separated from its traditional and odious technique, the pursuit of his vocation plainly seemed to him neither legitimate nor altogether decent. "Mr. Murksom is very helpful," he added in a refined whisper, delicately averting his eyes. He had relapsed again into the "manner"; he just couldn't help it. It was as if he had said: "Even if for some perverse reason *you* refuse to act your part, it will never be said of me that I have failed in mine."

"Won't you—rest," he then suggested, indicating one of the rocking-chairs; and I realized, with an all but uncontrollable desire to laugh aloud, that the slight hesitation followed by the mortuary word "rest," was his tribute to my presumable and complete prostration. I took possession of the rocking-chair, but he sat down on an angular piece of "mission" work, with a straight back, and then brought the tips of his fingers together in a fashion that positively murmured, but without the crudity of words: "The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away."

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“ Will you have a cigarette? ” I brutally inquired, for I was about to smoke one myself. And this, I saw with relief, for the time being, definitely broke the spell. With a cigarette in his mouth, or between his fingers, it was impossible, even for him, to produce any of his effects. He gave up trying to, and we talked. Among other things, I asked him, while I waited for the return of Mr. Murksom, how he had come to choose his occupation. All my life I had wanted to ask an undertaker that, but I never before had been given so good an opening. His reply was interesting, as, indeed, I knew it would be, or I shouldn't have asked the question.

“ I didn't exactly choose it, ” he replied. “ I don't think anybody ever does. It isn't the kind of a job a person really chooses. I just drifted into it, little by little. That's what they all do, I think. I had a friend who used to drive the wagon, and sometimes when he had to go very far, I'd go along with him to keep him company and hold the horses while he was inside. You get to talking, sometimes, and

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when you talk about things you kind of get used to them. After awhile they seem natural. Sometimes, when my friend had things to do here at the office, I used to help him; you might just as well, as to sit around doing nothing. And then someone offers you a job, and as you know a good deal about it by that time, and don't mind, you take it. You kind of get into it by degrees."

Just here Mr. Murksom appeared, and I saw at a glance that beneath *his* spurious melancholy one might never penetrate. He had been at it for too many years. The professional manner, thick and unctuous, enveloped him. He couldn't have abandoned it had he wanted to. It clung to him, I was sure, at the lightest moments of his life. Of course, it was impossible to imagine his life as having any light moments, but assuming that such a thing could be, I felt that gayety with him would vaguely approximate only the gayety of a flag at half-mast. He would have approached the back platform of a street car in precisely the same soundless, sympathetic, discreetly afflicted way

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in which he approached a sobbing widow. It was the way, moreover, in which he at once approached me. I had craftily evaded the hand of his assistant, but there was no escaping the condoling pressure of Mr. Murksom. It had sought my own and gently, lugubriously squeezed it before I had been able to take defensive measures, and it did not, although I tried to drop it, immediately relax. In fact, it held on, and, with a kind of ghoulis authority, led me across the room and through the curtained doorway in the rear. The creature had divined everything; he knew exactly why I had come long before I had arrived to tell him. As I was drawn into the inner room I recalled the phrase "hand in glove," and it occurred to me that Mr. Murksom was quite unavoidably the glove upon the hand of God. I heard him sigh most convincingly on two notes, and although he didn't say anything continuous or even very coherent, I seemed to catch the words "very sad," and "always a shock, even when expected."

Once beyond the curtained doorway, I dis-

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engaged myself and again declared that I wished to look at coffins; but the manner in which Mr. Murksom, from then on, combined the shrewd salesman with the spiritual consoler is something my feeble pen altogether balks at recording. As far as I could see, there were no coffins in the room in which I had expected to find an embarrassment of choice, but, resting a protecting palm upon my shoulder as if to shield me from a sudden shock, Mr. Murksom pressed a button in the room's white paneling, and lo! a natty three hundred and fifty-dollar receptacle turned a sort of somersault and landed, so to speak, at our feet. It was exactly like opening, or letting down, the upper berth in a sleeping car, except that these berths were on end instead of on their sides. Before I had made up my mind, we had pressed buttons and lowered upper berths all around three sides of the room.

“Now, just what is the difference between this one, which costs two hundred, and that one, which is only ninety-eight?” I inquired, for to me they both looked very much alike.

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“ This one,” Mr. Murksom replied, and I could see he thought me a haggling, heartless person, “ is something more—more permanent. That one won’t—well, that one is, as one might say, less able to withstand the—the inevitable conditions. Personally,” he, to my surprise, hastened to add, “ I don’t wish for anything *too* permanent. ‘ Dust to dust,’ you know,” he murmured, as he pressed another button. This, I confess, surprised me very much, for it seemed to me that anyone who, for years and years, had buried several persons a day would necessarily fall into the habit of considering himself immortal. For a moment I thought of drawing him out on the subject; it occurred to me that a man whose whole life consisted of death ought to have made some illuminating reflections. Indeed, after I finally accomplished what I had come for, I did begin to ask a question, but was interrupted in the middle of it. For the young man suddenly appeared in the curtained doorway with something wrapped in brown paper and tied with a pink string. He was not exactly excited, he

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never could have been that, but he was, at least, natural. After our little conversation, I think he had concluded that there wasn't much point in keeping it up any longer with me. This, at any rate, is the only way in which I could account for his ignoring my presence to the extent of making, in a moment, a most extraordinary and startling announcement. He held the brown paper parcel toward Mr. Murksom, who had turned inquiringly toward him, and then exclaimed, with a pleased smile:

“They've found those legs.”

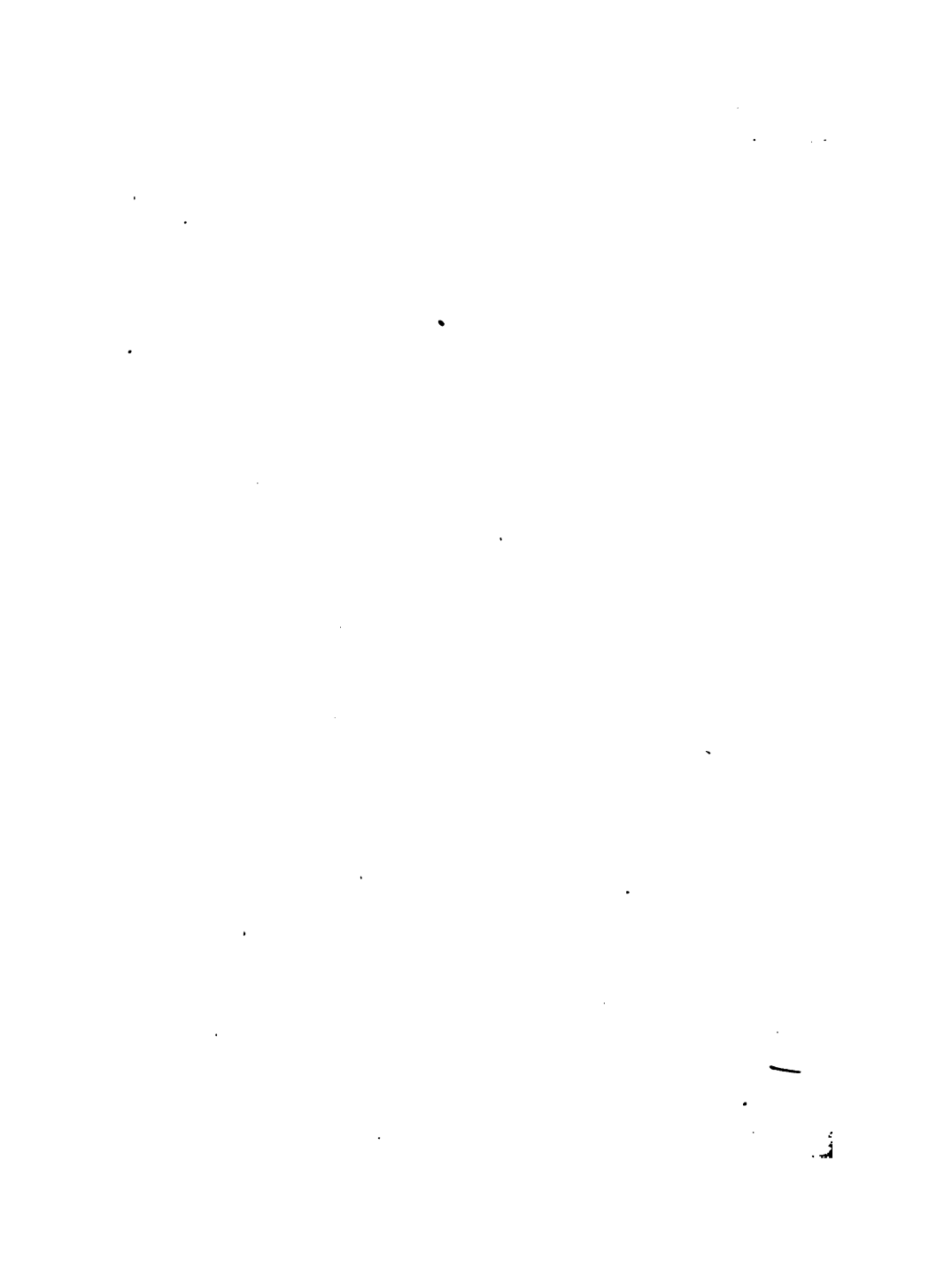
“Ah,” sighed Mr. Murksom, “and where were they?”

“In the wagon all the time. The horses just walked away from the house and a policeman stopped them as they were trying to get into a vacant lot to eat grass. Well,” he ended, in a gratified tone, “I'm glad they found those legs.”

At this, I somewhat hurriedly said good afternoon, and withdrew. They were very little legs. I read about them in the paper the next day.



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I CAN never decide which is the more annoying to a writer : to have people elaborately ignore the fact that he writes and has written, or to have them assume that he can't talk about, and isn't interested in, anything but books in general and his own in particular. The happy medium is conversationally discovered by only a very few, but this no doubt is the case with almost all happy mediums. It isn't in the least disconcerting to meet a person who is quite unaware of the fact that you are the clever Mr. Snooks, author of "The Swill Barrel: A Story of To-day." Indeed, when your new acquaintance has not even heard of either you or your latest work, you may be able to have with him a perfectly rational and agreeable conversation. But there is a type of person who has read "The Swill

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Barrel" with interest, who knows you wrote it, and who for some cryptic reason never alludes to it or betrays the fact that he realizes you are the clever Mr. Snooks. This is really most trying. You know that he knows; he knows that you know that he knows, and you both somewhat consciously talk about other things—he, because of an utterly misguided idea that it is "in better taste" not to speak of a book to its author, and you, because, under the circumstances, you would rather die than admit you recognized a pen when you saw it reposing on a desk.

To refrain from speaking to a writer of his books because you think it in better taste not to, because "he must be so tired of having people talk to him about that book," is to display a not particularly keen or sympathetic understanding of human nature. A writer, whether he be a novelist, a historian, a writer of essays, a writer of editorials, a poet, a reporter, a message indicting President of the United States, or the secretary of a charitable organization, invariably hopes that what he

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writes will be read; that it will please, amuse, instruct, inform, divert,—that, in a word, it will *interest* somebody, or rather, a group of somebodies. With many writers the commercial aspect of the transaction is, of course, always prominent, but their commercial success depends, after all, upon their ability to charm. Once having grasped the pen and set out to do any of these things, it is only human and natural to be gratified on learning that you have succeeded, and if the people you from time to time meet don't tell you that you have, you remain in dreadful doubt. To the ears of a writer no music on earth is sweeter than intelligent praise, and even praise that is not intelligent is sweet if it has the ring of sincerity. I remember once taking in to dinner a young girl who assured me that she had very much enjoyed a certain story of mine because it had made her "cry and cry and cry." Most insincerely, as I knew which story it must have been, I asked her the name of it. She thereupon adorably declared that she didn't remember the name, she couldn't recall where she

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had come across it, and she had forgotten what it was about, but she had "cried and cried and cried."

Occasionally writers have assured me that it bored them to receive enthusiastic letters about their books, and I have at once, mentally, replied "You're a liar." No writer is ever anything but pleased to learn that some one has found something, anything, of interest or value in one of his efforts. One may write primarily for money, to make a living, but no matter to what trashy and flashy depths a writer may descend, there is always in his books something of himself. However hard he might try, he could not keep it out, and it immensely pleases him to have it discovered and commented upon, either in a letter from an unknown reader or in a five minutes' conversation. To me few incidents are as agreeable, as altogether gratifying and satisfactory, as is the incident of opening an envelope addressed in an unknown handwriting and finding inside a letter that begins, "I have never written to an author before, but I feel that I must write

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to tell you that," etc., etc. And any one who has written a book and declares that letters like this do not please him, is simply a *poseur* or untruthful, or both.

In the case of the great and famous it no doubt now and then ceases to be a pleasure. A daughter of Longfellow told me that her father had once received an imperative note from some woman, worded about as follows: "Dear Sir: I have issued invitations for a ladies' luncheon a week from next Wednesday. There will be about fifty present and I wish to present each of them with your autograph as a souvenir. Kindly send me at once fifty autographs to the address given below." Longfellow was the kindest and most courteous of men, but this was a little more than even he could "stand for," as we would express it to-day. The luncheon was unautographic.

On the other hand, many persons not only do not ignore the fact that a writer is a writer, they have an inexplicable habit of regarding him and his books as a kind of legitimate prey.

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When they hear they are going to meet him at some gathering they make a point of refreshing their memories on the subject of his various volumes, if they have read them before, or endeavor to skim through one or two if they have not already made their acquaintance. They then have a comfortable feeling that their conversational equipment is complete, and they relentlessly talk to the poor wretch about nothing but his works. They ask him how he came to think of certain characters, if they were drawn from life, how long it takes him to write a novel, has he any regular hours for working or does he wait for an "inspiration," how much does he get for a short story in such and such a magazine, has his latest book been selling well, doesn't he find writing a delightful, a fascinating occupation, what is he writing now, when will it be finished, who is going to publish it, and does he get a lump sum for it or a royalty on every copy? I don't exaggerate; in fact, I have omitted a long list of searching and personal questions to which a writer is constantly

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subjected. The ordinary attitude toward a person who makes his living by grinding out books has always been to me an inexplicable one. Nobody with the smallest grain of sense or tact is ever impelled to cross-question a lawyer about his cases in court or a doctor about his cases in the hospital. The thing is almost inconceivable, and when it does very occasionally happen, the thoughtless interlocutor is very properly snubbed. One would experience a certain delicacy in asking even a tailor about the various garments he was cutting and sewing, but comparatively few persons have scruples against putting a writer through the third degree. To me this has always been remarkable, because I realize that in almost every lawsuit, however trivial, and in almost every case of illness, there is more emotion, more hope and fear, more ingenuity, more drama, more "human interest," than in all the novels and stories put together. And yet lawyers and doctors and tailors and real estate men seem to escape, while writers are everywhere lashed to the interrogatory mast.

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It also has always seemed strange that a man or woman who writes books, however thin and lacking in importance, is invariably given, wherever he goes, a luncheon, a dinner, or that altogether horrible form of human intercourse known as a "tea." Other men and women who from every point of view have made a success of their lives can enter a town, stay for two weeks and depart without being noticed. But when Richard Thyng Snooks (author of "The Swill Barrel: A Story of Today," a very poor story I beg to assert) arrives, innumerable festivities are arranged in his honor. He is asked to luncheon and dinner, it is hoped that he can be prevailed upon to "say something," anything, at some entertainment during his all too brief stay. The local branch of the Federated Women's Clubs invariably tries to lasso him, and is terribly disappointed if it doesn't succeed. Knowing many writers of books, as by accident I happen to, this is something I have never been able to comprehend.

Personally, my feeling toward my various

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scribbling friends is that I like them, not because they write, but in spite of it. We meet and gossip about a thousand things, but I can scarcely remember talking with any of them on the subject of writing. It is only with the kind of person who looks upon a printed and launched book as a sort of achievement (which of course it isn't) that one talks about the making of books. Men and women who write, I have learned, are usually grateful when they can temporarily be made to forget about it.

It is conventional to think of writers as eccentric creatures who live apart in a world of their own. I have known many, but I have not found this to be the fact. As a rule I have discovered that the anecdotes about them have been built upon the most slender foundations, either by well-meaning admirers who imagined for them an interesting atmosphere of which they themselves were guiltless, or by malicious gossips who hoped to do them harm. The things printed about writers in newspapers are usually half truths ingeniously distorted, or

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absolute falsehoods. The actual peculiarities of writers, the little prejudices and habits and superstitions they almost all have to a greater or less degree, rarely find their way into type, because they are so rarely spoken of. One knows, of course, that Fénelon was able to write in comfort only when dressed in court costume, with fine, clean lace falling over his slender, aristocratic hands; that Balzac, in the agonies of composition, consumed quarts of strong coffee and wore a kind of monastic dressing gown; that Dickens always had upon his desk, wherever he went, a little collection of valueless ornaments he was used to seeing there, and without which he felt ill at ease and unable to begin his task; that Thackeray usually hated to write and, as a rule, dragged himself to his pen and ink with extreme repugnance; that Schiller kept in the drawer of his writing table half a dozen rotten apples, the smell of which he inhaled deeply before he was able to compose. Such instances, and hundreds of others, are authentic and historic. They have become known because the writers who were

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responsible for them are famous the world over, and nothing in their lives seems to be too insignificant to be ferreted out and proclaimed.

It is interesting to know that lesser scribes are everywhere, in all sincerity, the victims of much the same whims and unaccountable, innocent manias. A talented and successful woman novelist of my acquaintance once confided in me that she never felt like writing unless her hands were dirty. In winter, before sitting down to write, she always dusts a room, a shelf of books, or builds a fire. In summer she spends half an hour or so pulling up weeds in the garden. Her hands are then dirty and comfortable, and she can write with comparative enjoyment. A man I know, however, always scrubs his hands with hot water and soap before beginning to write, and then squirts a drop or two of cologne on them. This sounds as if he wrote highly romantic fiction or lackadaisical poetry. As a matter of fact, his subjects are history and political economy, and he is regarded as an authority upon those serious matters. But these are queer, intensely per-

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sonal little traits that emerge diffidently, almost reluctantly, only when one knows a writer very well indeed. They are not the sort of stuff that finds its way into the newspapers.

My experience with writers may not be conclusive, but it seems to have dawned on me that, the more important a writer is, the more stable and justified his place is in the world of letters, the less eager he is to chatter about his profession. It is the person who has more or less accidentally had one story accepted by *Scribner's*, *Harpers'* or the *Century*, or the contributor to some third-rate sectional magazine, who insists upon talking of his "work," who is forever hinting of the conspiracy among editors and publishers to reject anything unsigned by a well-known name. Real writers usually go about their business calmly, methodically and with little or no enthusiasm. It is rarely writing that they find "delightful and fascinating"; it is the having written. Those I have known intimately have without exception admitted that they could always re-read with interest certain passages from their own

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books when other diversions failed them, and while they often were conscious of opportunities lost, of having gone astray, of having failed to achieve the effect at which they aimed, they on the other hand were more than compensated by the discovery of certain phrases, paragraphs and whole pages they had almost forgotten and that struck them as being surprisingly skilful.

One hears much of the long, discouraging struggle for acceptance and recognition waged by young authors, how their manuscripts are returned unread by the editors of great magazines because their names are unknown, and so on. Having been a reader on a magazine myself, I listen to such tales with an exceedingly skeptical ear. In the United States, at least, it is much more difficult to keep out of print than to get into it. Editors and publishers read, or have their readers read, with the most painstaking care, absolutely everything submitted to them. Not to do so would be fatal; it would incur the risk of missing something, of failing to make the occasional

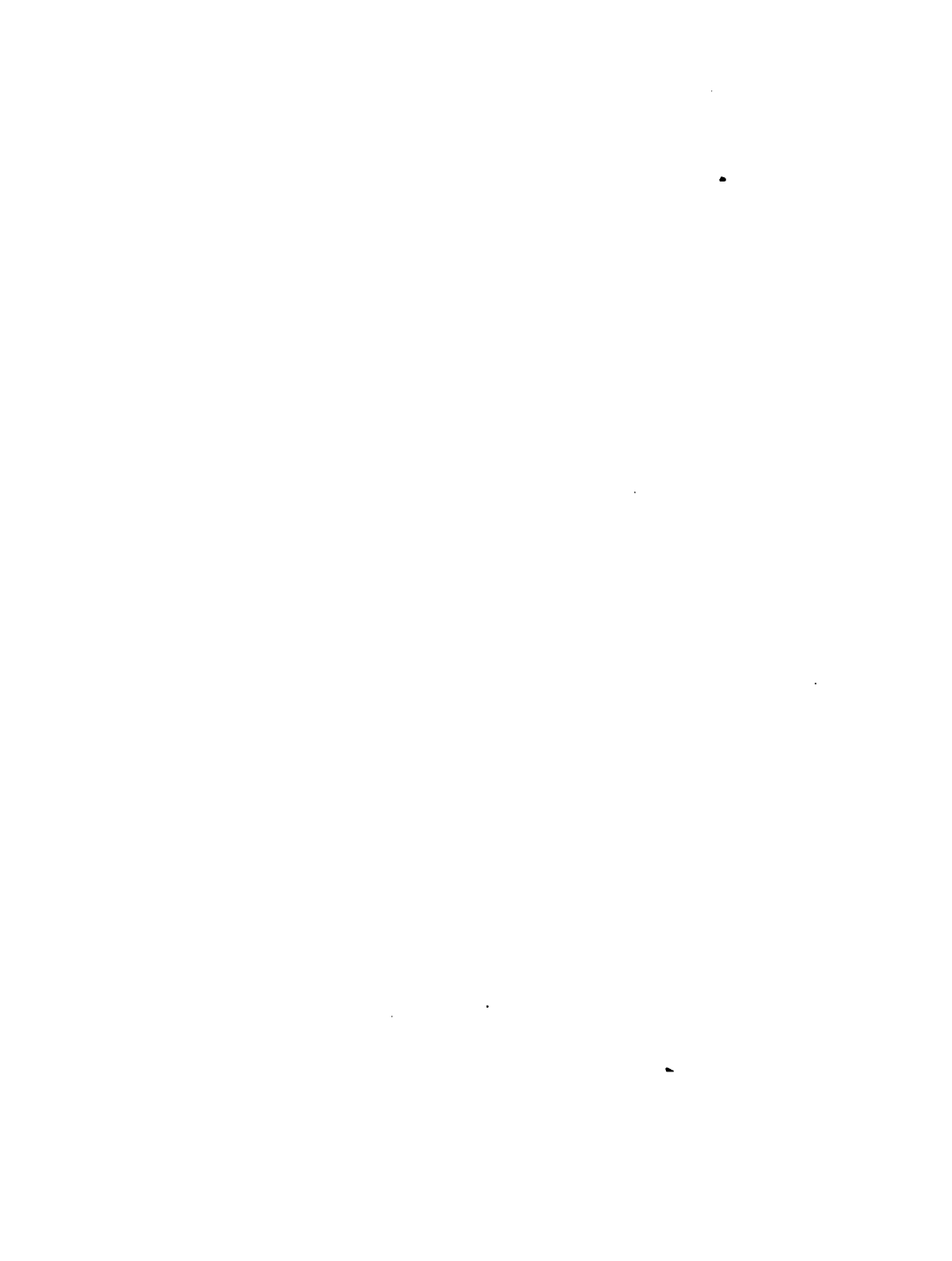
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big killing. Being human, they naturally make mistakes they bitterly regret; and it seems to me that this usually happens when the manuscripts sent in have about them a touch of genius. Genius is always somewhat ahead of its time, and publishers are invariably a little afraid of it. They have toward it much the same attitude that a nice old lady might have toward an invitation from Wilbur Wright to take a spin with him in his flying machine. They prefer something more reliable, more within their experience. It is said that Kipling's "Plain Tales" made the rounds of all our magazines and publishing houses before they found any one sufficiently daring to print them. They were "different," both in matter and in manner; they were not of the old reliable, tried and true variety; they had about them something very like genius. But it seems incredible that anyone nowadays, who can borrow a respectable plot and unfold it in a style sufficiently lacking in originality, should be denied admittance to the magazines and the publishers' catalogues. I don't believe it.

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And at present the field appears to offer unusual opportunities, for not long ago Laura Jean Libbey decided (at least so I read in a New York paper) "to lay down her tired pen and give other women writers a chance." Miss Libbey is furthermore said to have declared to the reporter who interviewed her on her retirement from the active world of letters, that in looking back upon her busy career she had but one regret; she sometimes feared that the name of one of her books was too long. When asked which one it could have been, she replied that it was the novel entitled, "You Would Not Have Blamed Her for Going Wrong, if You Had Known What the Conditions Were at Home."

“ANN VERONICA”



“ ANN VERONICA ”

ABOUT an hour ago I finished reading the latest novel of Mr. H. G. Wells. I laid it aside and since then I have been thinking about it. During the past month a great many other persons apparently have been doing precisely the same thing. For whatever may be one's verdict on the novels of Mr. Wells, and the verdicts are absorbingly different, it cannot be said that these volumes do not incite one to think. The ordinary American and English novel does not. It may be, and often is, skilful and diverting; it holds the attention and “passes the time,” but on finishing it one immediately begins to think of something else. It almost never seems to be the cause of the slightest kind of mental result. Personally, I cannot, for instance, conceive of one's reading a book by Mrs.

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Humphry Ward, Robert Chambers, Richard Harding Davis, Hamlin Garland, Robert Hichens, not to mention hundreds of others, and having, subsequently, any kind of mental reaction. They all without doubt write more or less well, amuse a great many people for a few hours, and incidentally make a good and honest living. But there it all ends. They are trained performers, and entirely justified because they are so well trained. They do things we are all accustomed to having well done and they do them better than most. Almost invariably I applaud the industrious Mrs. Ward when she produces still another work of fiction; it is usually so neat, so competent, so adequate, so professional. She once wrote with not much skill an important book, "Robert Elsmere," and since then she has made an enormous income by writing with extreme skill books of no importance whatever. Toward the ordinary "good" writer of contemporary novels I confess that I feel very much as one feels at the theater devoted to vaudeville, when a lady hops along an almost in-

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visible wire on one leg, or a gentleman gracefully promenades about the stage on his hands or his head. It is all rather difficult to do; it has taken time and training; it is diverting to watch and it is well paid for. But when the curtain descends one begins to think about the performing seals or the ventriloquist who is advertised to appear next. As soon as the act is over, it is over. There is nothing to reflect upon, to take home with one, so to speak. I should dislike to give the impression that for this reason I depreciate the act or “look down” on it. Such is not the case. I merely beg, superfluously, perhaps, to state that it has its place in the world, fulfills its little destiny, and that its destiny has nothing to do with the progress, or even the activity, of human thought.

The novels of Mr. Wells, on the other hand, are quite different. I am not going to review them, criticise or appraise them. That has been done, and will be done, by far more able pens than mine. I simply have an irresistible desire to record that whatever one thinks about

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them they are, after all, first and last, novels about which it is impossible not to think. This seems to me to be a great deal at the outset. I am unable to recall more than three other English-writing novelists of the present day who inspire me with the same sensations. To sit for awhile and reflect on this volume leads me far away from it into a tortuous maze of thought about all kinds of things—about life, about art, about literary style in general, and then about certain specific aspects and corners and byways, disputed boundaries and quaking bogs of these subjects, in particular. The book has been discussed in my presence by several persons, all of whom are unusually intelligent, and I think my only reason for mentioning it is because it got these good minds started, got them going with, to me, distinctly interesting results. The discussions shed a light and also erected a perfect barricade of question marks at the end of every path I have, in considering the matter, attempted to tread.

The story, like the stories of most great writers (and it gives me pleasure to be able to

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say that I happen to consider Mr. Wells a great writer), is exceedingly simple. The unupholstered skeleton of it is this: A young English girl of an upper-middle-class family lives with her father and her aunt in a pleasant, comfortable London suburb. The temperaments, ideas and activities of the father and the aunt are absolutely mid-Victorian. The girl, however, has inhaled the atmosphere of the twentieth century. She has gone to lectures at a college and studied biology; in an immature fashion she inevitably belongs to a world entirely different from that of her estimable and tedious father, from that of her refined and intellectually unawakened aunt. One evening she wishes to go to a fancy-dress party with some artistic friends of hers who live in the same suburb. Her father, with his vague, natural and perfectly comprehensible horror of anything “artistic,” forbids her to go, makes it, in fact, impossible to go; whereupon the daughter, revolting from her sheltered, commonplace, mentally stultifying domesticity, leaves the paternal hearth and under-

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takes to lead a life of her own in London. The rest of the story has to do with the development of the mind and soul of the girl who is both essentially feminine and essentially modern.

Of course I was intensely interested in the comments to which I have referred, not so much because they threw light on the book (the book speaks for itself), but because of the light they threw on the persons who made them and the questions they evoked.

“Yes, I read the book and I consider it objectionable from almost every point of view,” declared Smith.

“What you really mean is that you consider it objectionable from every point of view which you are by temperament and education capable of taking,” replied Jones. “There are other points of view in the world; no one person is able to possess them all. I, for instance, do not consider the book objectionable in any way. It strikes me as being a theme, or rather several themes, of vital interest treated by a master in a masterly fashion.”

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“But I cannot feel that such themes are legitimate in a work of fiction—a work of art,” protested Smith; “especially,” he went on, “when they are treated so mercilessly—with so much—so much——”

“So much truth,” Jones interposed in a tone of superiority and triumph. “You will have to admit, I am sure, that there isn’t a false note in the whole story; it has the ring of relentless truth from the first page to the last. Do you mean to say that you shrink from the truth—that you don’t prefer truth always to prevail?”

Smith squirmed a trifle, but held his ground. “I am not at all sure that, in a work of fiction (and a work of fiction should be a work of art), absolute truth should be sought for. I see the difference between art and science. Why should one endeavor to be the other?” he inquired.

“But a novel purports to be a picture of life.”

“Yes, exactly—a picture; and a picture isn’t life itself; it is, or ought to be, after all, a picture,” said Smith, momentarily triumphant.

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phant in turn. "The human body, for instance, has been painted and sculptured from the beginning of civilization, and, indeed, before it, but even to-day, with all our modern passion for fact or verity or whatever you choose to call it, even the most realistic of sculptors and painters has a tendency to grope toward beauty of form, to portray human beings without clothes more as they ought to look rather than as they actually do. This, it seems to me, is the wonderful privilege and function of art. It should embellish life, not perpetuate its ugliness. Toward the writing of novels I feel much the same. There are entire sides of life that do not strike me as a proper field of exploitation in a tale, a narrative, a novel."

"But what is a poor, unhappy man of talent to do?" exclaimed Jones. "Here is Wells. He has observed with microscopic fidelity a young girl whose character, habit of thought, conception of life, her attitude toward the entire universe, in short, has developed and been formed in an epoch grotesquely different from that in which her father and aunt received their

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indelible impressions. The result is a domestic tragedy. It interested Wells; he sees all around it; it strikes him as being of immense value in the history of human shift and change; he wants to record it; he does so with the marvelous vividness and truthfulness of which he almost alone is at present master, and then you go and call him offensive and objectionable and a lot of other things. What do you want a man like that to do? Ought he to observe and reflect merely for his own instruction, and then when he puts pen to paper, perpetrate a new series of the ‘Elsie Books’ or ‘Dottie Dimple’?”

“Now, of course, you have become extreme and unfair,” objected Smith. “I need hardly say that even during my earliest years I couldn’t endure the ‘Dottie Dimple’ and ‘Elsie’ tendencies of fiction. Besides, you know perfectly well the sort of books I enjoy. You know that, strangely enough, I revel in both Thackeray and Dickens. I have read ‘Middlemarch’ six times and hope to read it many times more. I can always re-read the

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Brontës and Mrs. Gaskell and Meredith and Hardy. Howells has rarely failed me. Henry James used to charm and enchant me and he still always interests me even when I have to work hard to translate him. But what's the use of naming any others? The list is sufficiently comprehensive to show that I am not narrow-minded."

"The list is admirable as far as it goes," Jones agreed; "I have but one fault to find with it, which is that you have read this and several other books by Wells with interest, and yet you will not accept him and enroll his name. The man is important in the world of letters; if he were not, you and I could not possibly spend so much time in talking about him. Tacitly you admit this. Why do you refuse to admit it positively? It makes me feel that you are not quite keeping in step with your epoch, your age, your time, your period. This is a marvelous age, and aren't you rather deliberately falling behind it? By the way, where does Balzac come in? You haven't mentioned Balzac."

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“I have read nearly everything of Balzac with sincere interest,” Smith admitted. “He is a literary wonder, a giant; sometimes he seems to me to be a kind of intellectual monster.”

“Yet Balzac was anything but squeamish in his choice of subject or his fashion of treating it. He, too, had his microscope. He stuck the end of it in his eye and looked at life and wrote accounts of his investigations. Surely they cannot always have pleased you!”

“No, they don't. And here, you may laugh if you want to, but I can't help confessing that I have entirely different feelings when I read awful things about French people. It is no doubt illogical, absurd, anything you please; but somehow I can't be upset and disgusted by the turpitude of a hero named, for example, 'Lucien de Rubempré,' as I should be if he did the same things and his name was Peter Jackson.”

“How splendidly limited you are!” reflected Jones. “It does not occur to you that human life is human life; that the fact of its

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being English or French, American or Norwegian, is a mere accident. In the end it is always just the same. You can, in a word, endure the naked truth about persons who are not of your own nationality and whose language is not very familiar to you, but you hate to have the truth told about your neighbors and acquaintances and friends. You hate to have a writer of English tackle either the fundamental questions of existence, or any of the ugly, gross, squalid, frightful, real aspects that can be found without any trouble whatever in every well-regulated family."

"George Eliot tackled a tragic and ugly incident in 'Adam Bede,' but I think 'Adam Bede' is a great and beautiful book," declared Smith. "You see, it isn't altogether a question of subject; it is largely a question of treatment."

"How differently Wells would have treated 'Adam Bede'!" mused the other.

"Yes, and in my opinion he would have ruined it," Smith hastened to add. "George Eliot wrote with a pen; Wells writes with a

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clinical thermometer and a stethoscope. I may be behind the times, but I prefer novels to be written with a pen. In the long run I firmly believe that for the purposes of literature the pen is mightier than the surgical instrument.”

“ That may be,” conceded Jones with reluctance, “ but why not keep one’s mind open to every sincere and interesting experiment in the world of letters or the world of anything else? And there can be no question at all of Wells’s sincerity. With a most extraordinary intellectual equipment and gift for expression through the medium of words, he has undertaken in his novels to examine the Anglo-Saxon mind and heart and soul; to strip them of every vestige of their conventional garments and to display them quivering, real, naked. It is not only an attempt entirely new in English fiction, which in itself attracts my literary attention; it is, in the case of Wells, a successful attempt which both attracts my attention and firmly holds it.”

“ But I hate and detest and loathe ‘ quivering ’ souls and minds and hearts running

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around loose in fiction," Smith almost shrieked. "I don't wish to encounter them there; as a matter of fact, I don't wish to encounter them anywhere. Sometimes on the journey through life one has to; the meeting is unavoidable, but I declare and protest that I have never sought an introduction to them. I don't want them to be thrust upon me, ever."

At this point Mrs. Robinson suddenly tossed aside the doily she had been all along crocheting in receptive silence, and exclaimed:

"I've read the book you two helpless and rather ridiculous men have been trying to discuss, and I think you have both missed the entire point of it. You've been chattering and gabbling about art and literature and morality but you haven't touched at all on what is the backbone of the book. I've been listening to you, and you both express yourselves with conviction and some force; but both of you have missed the point." Mrs. Robinson smiled at us wisely and maternally, including me, although I had kept out of the discussion. She is a woman of sixty-five. She has known the

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world, she has lived and she has thought, and on the subject of “ Ann Veronica ” she spoke as follows :

“ I read the book. It of course interested me ; if it hadn't I should not have finished it. Now listen, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones, to an old woman and try to realize where she rises intellectually above you both. To Mr. Smith the book is out of the question, impossible. To Mr. Jones it is an important, perhaps a great study of certain phases of contemporary life. Neither of you will concede an inch, and neither of you seem to be aware of the fact that the interest of the book does not consist in its frankness of phrase, in its matter-of-fact acceptance of unconventionality. What the story crystallizes, in a fashion that will make the average middle-aged parent sit up and gasp, is the tragic impossibility of a parent comprehending and sympathizing with its own offspring. As you know, I have long been a mother of grown-up children, and my family is remarkably ‘ united,’ as the saying is ; but if you take your courage in your hands, open

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wide your eyes and honestly, pitilessly examine almost any family however theoretically, technically 'united,' what do you discover? I am not talking of the idealist and the sentimentalist. I am referring to cool and calm investigators like, let us say, this man Wells you both have been talking about. He has examined a certain family. It is just one small family, but the writer has succeeded to an astonishing degree in typifying the modern family in general, although to admit that he has may be repellent.

"The world," declared Mrs. Robinson, "is moving with a rather frightening, breath-taking rapidity. Even parents, comparatively young, no longer live the lives of their children. I'm not such an old fool as to believe for a moment that I know what my boys are doing or what my girls are thinking. I used to consider it possible; I now am convinced that it is impossible. Such character as I have developed and solidified, I achieved under circumstances that do not now obtain, although I tried, wrongly perhaps, to keep them up, to

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prolong them and make them influences in the lives of the beings for whom I am responsible. My greatest claim to modernity consists in the fact that I have gracefully recognized and accepted defeat. My children are my children, but they also are children of a period in the world's history to which I really do not in a heartfelt way belong. This in many respects is sad, it is even at times horrible. But here we are! What are we going to do about it? Ann Veronica belonged violently to her time. Her father belonged tenaciously to his. To preserve a united family, what, given these conditions, must happen? Simply concessions. To preserve the happy family, Ann must always forfeit some of her intelligence and modernity; Papa and Mamma must always concede to—oh, all sorts of little things (sometimes they are dreadfully big things) that they abominate. Parents and children have to scare up a kind of domestic philosophy and meet one another half way. When they don't there is no longer a 'united' family. There is a drama of some sort and Mr. Wells sits down and

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writes a story about it. Ann was the kind of offspring who would not concede. Her father was the kind of parent who would not concede. You have seen what happened. I am not so sure that Mr. Wells himself is aware of what is really the lesson of his novel, but it is that sixty rarely has sympathy with and genuine understanding of twenty, and twenty in its heart of hearts looks upon sixty, not as perhaps experienced and wise, but as rather absurd. Concessions! All life is an endless succession of them. If we didn't at every moment make them, everybody in the world would have to live in absolute solitude, and even then he would have to concede to the forces of nature, the sun and the rain, the cold and the dark, hunger, weariness and sleep.

“ Now stop this wrangling, Mr. Smith and Mr. Jones,” the good lady went on, “ and both concede a little. You, Mr. Smith, must concede that the book is interesting and written with a skill, a gift for observation and expression possessed by few, although I shall allow you to retain your temperamental bias and con-

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sider the story uncalled for and the treatment coarse.

“ You, Mr. Jones, must concede that this manner of writing, of depicting life, is an innovation in English; that although you enjoy it, it may not be a wise one; that instead of merely amusing and doing good it may have the power to do harm, and that Mr. Smith is entitled to his opinion even if it doesn't coincide with yours. There is much to be said in favor of Mr. Smith's opinion.”

“ And what is your opinion, Mrs. Robinson?” I at this point inquired.

“ Oh, I haven't any,” she replied gayly. “ A really wise old woman never has.”



HOLIDAYS



HOLIDAYS

WITH me, at least, holidays finally became an issue that had to be met, faced and, once and for all, disposed of. For years I half-consciously postponed the matter and went through many of the motions supposed to be essential to their respective spirits. On the Fourth of July, for instance, I would try to feel noisily inclined and patriotic, although my patriotism is not of a blatant variety and I had begun to dread noise almost more than I dreaded any other ill to which the human flesh is heir. On Christmas I endeavored, in the most painstaking fashion, to scare up a good-will-to-everybody sensation that I didn't sincerely possess. On Thanksgiving Day I tried to observe the convention, not of giving thanks, for that has never become a convention, but of pretending

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that I desired more than usual to eat, which I never did and never do. But, all the while, firecrackers were becoming more and more abhorrent, geniality around the Yule log more of a bore, the sight of excessive food more repulsive, and, finally, I began to realize what was happening to me. Quite simply and naturally and inevitably, darling "was growing old; silver threads among the gold," and not only silver threads (they are the least of it) but a lot of other things were taking place. It is all very interesting, and one of the most interesting things about it is the incredibly short time in which it seems to happen. Perhaps my memory is extremely erratic; in fact I feel sure it is, for sometimes last week is almost a total blank, whereas twenty and occasionally even thirty (dear Heaven!) years ago are vivid, clear-cut and intelligible. The more ancient date often seems more real and alive than the later. I haven't the vaguest idea of what I did last Tuesday. There undoubtedly was a last Tuesday, but now, as far as I am concerned, it did not exist, although I am

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reasonably sure that while it ticked itself away I was clothed and in my right mind. On the other hand, I can most accurately recall, for example, the early morning of the Fourth of July, 1884. How we "conspired at every pore"! I remember going to bed most respectably and innocently at the usual time, waiting until the more mature members of the family were sound asleep and then sneaking down to the drawing-room and dozing restlessly on a sofa until about half-past two A. M. At that weird and ecstatic hour we emerged from a French window, extricated our fire-crackers from the little "dog-house" in which we had secreted them and proceeded to make the rest of the night altogether odious. It comes back to me that an accidental spark popped into the ammunition box and, with a heart-rending, rip-snorthing crash, flash and agonized detonation, destroyed everything in about one and a half tragic minutes. It was astonishing and glorious while it lasted, but it lasted such a short time that the rest of the night would have been left, so to speak, on

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our hands, if someone had not reluctantly tip-toed to his house and produced the supply he had been hoarding for the daylight hours. Then, with a huge bonfire, we all but ruined a beautiful elm tree, set fire to the fence, burned great chasms in the wooden sidewalk and had a perfectly delightful time generally.

I refer to these ordinary activities of the American male child only because I feel as if I had been engaging in them yesterday morning instead of twenty-five years ago, and because, in spite of my photographic recollection, so many queer things have taken place. To begin with, whereas I still, in memory, am able to reëxperience the exquisite thrill I had when, at the age of thirteen, I would hold a giant firecracker in my hand until the last advisable fraction of a second, I now have a horror of giant firecrackers, or indeed of anything that noisily explodes with possible dire results. In Mexico, for instance, when my brother and I are making, on mule back, a journey in an isolated part of the country, he

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always insists on my carrying a revolver in a large, visible holster. Mexicans have a most erroneous idea that with a revolver all Americans have an accurate and deadly aim. My brother considers this a great moral support and declares that the idea ought to be encouraged. Well, I carry the revolver, but I don't mind confessing that I am much more afraid of it than I am of anything else in Mexico. The dangerous implement keeps bumping against my hip, reminding me that it is there and that it might tear six large holes in me at any moment. It is always an immense relief to arrive somewhere and, in a gingerly fashion, take it off and put it on a table or a bureau. Yet twenty-five years ago, nothing could have made me feel so proud, so brave, so competent to face the entire world as a revolver bumping against my hip. The old feeling for the Fourth of July has simply gone, disappeared, evaporated in some inscrutable fashion. It now has become for me a day of genuine misery, unless I am happy enough to spend it where it is not "observed."

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In addition to loathing the noise because I can't help it, I more and more every year hate it because I am increasingly depressed by the knowledge of all the so easily preventable mutilations with which it is associated; I hate it because of the pain I have known it to inflict upon the sick and dying. Even many of the lower animals of my acquaintance, dogs and horses in particular, regularly once a year spend twenty-four hours of mental and physical agony on the Fourth of July. While trying to reassure an old dog who had crawled under a bed and collapsed with a nervous chill, while trying to calm the uncontrollable terror of a steady, sensible, intelligent horse, I have often fervently wished that there had been no Revolution and that we had remained a British colony.

Thanksgiving Day became a horror of an entirely different kind. As I look back on the evolution of what has finally become my attitude toward holidays, I am convinced that the impulse to my detestation of the well-meant festival was given originally by the annual

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proclamations of the Presidents of the United States and the governors of the state in which I happened to have been born and brought up. To be President of the United States of America is, we are told, to hold the highest possible public office in the universe, but apparently one of the conditions of election to this exalted estate is that no President shall ever officially write anything for publication that is not obvious, pompous, platitudinous and unreadable. The printed remarks of governors are even, if possible, more so. Reading, once in so often, dear, dead old phrases about the "universal prosperity now existing throughout the length and breadth of this great land," was, I am sure, what first began to make me realize that Thanksgiving Day is a most dreadful affair.

If the Fourth of July drives one distracted with its fiendish noise, the day of giving thanks has almost the same effect if one pays any special attention to it, by reason of its unnatural quiet. It comes at a dreary time of year when outside there is nothing in particular

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to do and nowhere in particular to go. One stays in the house and, some time during the day, eats a variety of rather unusual and not necessarily agreeable things one would never think of ordering at a restaurant or a club. Until one has freed oneself from the thralldom of holidays (I have), the semi-historical, semi-culinary torpidity of Thanksgiving Day usually upsets one's routine, one's digestion, one's entire scheme of life. It is as if the Fourth of July had eloped with Christmas and the result of the union had been a kind of illegitimate Sunday.

And then Christmas. As I grow older, its original significance, its reason for being a holiday at all, becomes more full of meaning, more touching, more beautiful. It is not in the least obligatory to be religiously inclined in order to be profoundly moved by the symbolism of its pathos and poetry. The incident stands out, sums up, crystallizes for us, all that in our gentlest and best moods we believe about the great facts of birth, of motherhood, of infancy, of the family relation. It is our

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standard, our ideal; a serious contemplation of it must arouse in us everything that is most kindly, affectionate, generous, humble. The birth of the Infant Jesus, the attendant circumstances, the general scene and the significance of it all is, I happen to know, one of the few things that can cause a hard-faced, avaricious old billionaire to sink his head on his library table and burst into uncontrollable sobs.

But Christmas itself! I mean the day we have made of it. It is really a terrible day unless, perhaps, you are pretending to relieve it with the children which some of us don't possess. Just as I can recall delirious Fourths of July, I can recall Christmas days that were a scream of delight from energetic dawn until tired and sleepy midnight. The delicious, exciting smell of the pine tree, the feel of the "excelsior" in which the fragile ornaments were packed, the taste of those red and yellow animals made out of transparent candy, the taste of the little candles (for some strange, youthful reason we always purloined several of

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the candles and chewed them, even green ones, in secret. I can't imagine now why they didn't poison us), the thrilling effect of cotton batting spread on the floor at the tree's base (there were always, of course, acres of real snow just outside the front door but it quite lacked the power to entrance possessed by a few square feet of cotton batting)—for years I haven't smelled or tasted or seen any of these things. But how wonderful they used to be. Even the Christmas we spent at the ages of eight and five, in Gibraltar, and where our tree consisted of a small orange tree propped up in a slop jar, was the real thing. Every moment of it returns palpitating with the old Christmas sensation.

But now the day, aside from its real significance, to which apparently no great attention is paid, has, as far as I am concerned, lost all its old magic and charm. Of late years, when I have been sufficiently foolish to attempt to "make merry" on Christmas, I have found the twenty-fifth of December merely a memory that one can revive, but to which one may not

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give life or even a very successful, galvanic semblance of life. If, nowadays, I permitted Christmas to make any particular impression on me, which I don't, it would, I fear, be chiefly an annoying impression that I ought to be spending more money than I can afford in order to give, to persons I take but little interest in, presents they don't need. At any rate, that is the principal impression I seem to derive from the ante-Christmas conversation of most of my acquaintances who still conventionally observe the day.

In fact, the whole question of holidays had to be met and solved, and I rejoice in the fact that I have at last done it as successfully as have many other much more sensible people. It is the easier to do, I suppose, if circumstances have often necessitated one's spending the more important days in an environment lacking the slightest suggestion of domesticity. I have spent Christmas in a hotel in Athens, in a hotel in Paris, on shipboard, on a railway train, in the desert of Sahara, in tropical coun-

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tries where it was all but impossible to recall anything that remotely suggested the annual festival. Once I spent all of Christmas on the back of a lame mule.

This sort of thing, unless one happily possesses a temperament unusually innocent and robust, has but one result: holidays become mere dates on a calendar. They are welcome intruders if one happens to be tied down day after day, as most of us are, to any one exacting and monotonous occupation, but the way to enjoy them, to extract the best from them is, I have found, to ignore them. It is an immeasurable satisfaction when you at last haul down the flag and tell yourself that you don't in the least care what other people are doing on a certain day; when you finally cast out the disturbing belief that you ought to engage in some irritating or melancholy activity, generally supposed to be in keeping with the occasion. To observe Christmas by not observing it at all but by doing what you really feel like doing on a day of leisure, to dine on bread and butter and a cup of tea on Thanksgiving

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Day because they are what you most want, to seek on the Fourth of July a locality in which there is absolute quiet, all require some courage and, I regret to say, a certain age, but it is worth it.

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POLITE existence seems to be composed, in part, of a warp (or do I, perhaps, mean a woof?) of funny little pretensions and affectations, of rather meaningless standards and conventions, make-believes and poses. The polite world, broadly speaking, always seems to be divided into two classes; those who swallow it all whole, who believe in it, who practice and live up to it, and those who really don't, but who pretend they do for fear of forfeiting the esteem of the others. We all know persons who quite simply have been born into the world with what might be called aristocratic temperaments and instincts. They do not affect it; they cannot help it; it is innate, and they automatically observe the conventions because they like to, because it is the line of least resistance. On the other

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hand, no end of us go through almost precisely the same motions, but without conviction, and, when we feel reasonably sure that we sha'n't be found out, we relax and give a certain amount of free play to what happens to be our natures.

In few human relations does this fact seem to me to be more clearly revealed than in the attitude of the polite toward their servants. There is really, if one pauses to think about it, a tremendous amount of bunkum in the alleged relations between most of one's acquaintances and the people who attend to their various needs. I don't say all, because the sincere exceptions at once suggest themselves, but in the case of most I am inclined to believe that the matter is largely regulated by "what other people would think," rather than by natural promptings—by human spontaneity. How often have I heard a woman or a man scornfully exclaim, "Servant's gossip!" or, "She's the sort of woman who listens to her servants!" The first great crime apparently is to take the slightest interest in the point of view,

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“When Connor, the second man, is dressed up, he isn't a bad-looking man at all. You might almost mistake him for something else,” I have had a fat, coarse-skinned, rich, middle-aged woman half humorously assure me in speaking of one of her footmen, whose mere presence in the room made her entire family appear to be even more common than they actually were. The aristocratic tendency must have been omitted from me, for I have never been able to detect on my part the slightest desire to apologize for either intelligence or beauty wherever I wonderfully discovered it. If it is there, it is there, and instantly recognizable. But in the case of servants, it, for some reason, does not seem to be quite “the thing” to admit it.

Frankly, I like to talk to servants and always do when I feel conversationally inclined, and one of them is available. I extremely enjoy hearing what they have to say about their employment, their wages, their ambitions, the kind of treatment they receive from their employers and the characteristics of their em-

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Those, broadly speaking, are the four ways in which servants are usually looked upon. Personally, I never can quite comprehend the point of view that does not see a servant in the fashion I have mentioned last. And yet, judging from remarks that are made to one by both women and men about their servants, and from the testimony of those engaged in this form of labor, this manner of appreciating the servant class does not seem to be a usual one.

Many persons I know actually employ, in speaking to a servant, an entirely different tone of voice from the one they make use of habitually. In giving an order, or asking a question, the sounds ordinarily produced by their vocal chords undergo a sudden and entire change; they become dry, hard, metallic, and 'as impersonal as the human voice can sound. It is not that they are angry or irritated, or have hard hearts; it is merely because they are speaking to a servant, and for some reason, altogether obscure to me, this proceeding necessitates a difference in vocal pitch, key and in-

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English servants in nowise resemble the servants of other countries. The status of everyone of them is definitely fixed; I feel sure it appears somewhere in that unwritten constitution of England about which one hears and reads so much. They seem to be a class apart, a caste. Their outlines are defined with the most absolute exactitude. They never merge or melt or even temporarily fade into other and different outlines. They are what they are, and they know it and accept it. About them has grown up a conventional manner of treating them, of thinking about them, and alluding to them. It isn't exactly a cruel manner. It is the manner to which I have referred; one from which every personal, sympathetic, genial quality has been carefully eliminated; one in which the necessary words are reduced to their simplest, most direct and unadorned minimum. "Good" English servants

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But there are other ways of making servants "know their place" of which we in the West are by no means guiltless. One woman of my acquaintance invariably refuses to engage a maid who possesses that all but indispensable appurtenance known as a "gentleman friend." Another, for some cryptic reason, never allows a servant to take a trunk upstairs. All trunks must be unpacked and repacked downstairs. I don't know why; neither do they. It is merely one of her edicts, and it has contributed not a little to the local "servant problem."

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are becoming higher. Why shouldn't wages become higher if parlor maids and cooks can command them? Servants, I repeat, are a luxury. They do something for us that we could do ourselves, but don't wish to. We deny ourselves other luxuries when we can't afford them; why not deny ourselves servants if we can't conveniently pay the wages they are entitled to? It is an odd fact that we don't. Instead, we pay the wages and then complain and lament and get together and discuss "the servant problem."

A cook, who had lived for several years with a family of my acquaintance, abruptly left them because another household offered her a dollar a month more. In my opinion, her action was quite right. Why shouldn't she have done so? A dollar is, after all, a dollar. But the family she left, a kind, almost intelligent family, at that, has never ceased to talk of what they call her "ingratitude." I confess I am unable to see it. Like millions of other American families, they seem to think that to drudge under the same roof

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with them was a privilege, but if one pauses to examine the situation, it really wasn't.

I wish I had space enough in which to recall some of the servants I have known best, beginning, at a very early age, with one German and three French governesses, continuing with dear Mrs. Chester, who took care of my rooms when I was in college, and about whom I have written minutely and affectionately elsewhere; of Miss Shedd, the washwoman, to whom I left in my will the photograph of a Madonna she greatly admired, but who happened to die before I did, recounting, it gave me pleasure to be told, my various virtues in her last delirium; of the Madrassi servant I had in India, who, for no particular reason, used to burst into tears once a week, and declare that I was his "father and mother"; of the Jap, who looked down on me because he was a "Master," whereas I was only a "Bachelor," of Arts; of Aunt Nancy, who died last winter, after continuous, unbroken service in our family for seventy-seven years (the last fifteen or twenty years, I confess, did not in-

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clude occupation other than keeping alive on rye whisky and pipefuls of cut plug tobacco); of the marvelous servant in a popular Paris restaurant, whose only function was "to pacify the guests." Although dressed as a waiter, he never actually waited. He, instead, drifted about from table to table engaging one in conversation, soothing the complainers, lulling the impatient. He was tall and thin with a long, intelligent nose. Balzac would have immortalized him. He had a genius for tiding over the irritation of red-faced men in a hurry. When he saw that one had almost reached the point of explosion, he would saunter up to the table and begin to talk. In a few seconds the impatient, red-faced man would be proclaiming his opinion on some burning question of the day, and before he had finished, his belated order would be served.

Like everyone else, I have ideas for some five hundred books and fifty plays. One of the books will be called "Servants."

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THIS morning I read in the paper of the death of Mrs. White, and the short, inadequate paragraph startled me, not exactly because Mrs. White was dead, but rather because until yesterday afternoon she was alive. I had assumed that the good lady (how I wish I could remember just when I left off hating her and began to think of her as a good lady!) had died years ago and there was something grotesque and uncanny in her suddenly up and dying again out of a blue sky, so to speak. It was very much as if someone should pop out of an old tomb in a cemetery, take a hasty look around and then pop in again. If I had not long ago ceased to feel bitterly about her, I should have told myself that it was just like Mrs. White, that she was not a sincere woman, that she had

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never inspired me with confidence. But water has been flowing under the bridge for thirty-two years since my tears used to flow at Mrs. White's, and it so long ago eroded my bitterness that I now cannot recall when it was I last had any. Had I been asked yesterday how old Mrs. White would be by this time, I should have answered very conservatively for fear of seeming to exaggerate, "About a hundred and ninety-six," and the paper tells me she "passed away" in her seventy-first year. Good heavens—then when I knew her and regarded her as a senile monster with a gizzard of granite, she must really have been a nice-looking young woman of thirty-eight. How very strange.

Whenever I begin to think of Mrs. White's I have an unusually uncontrollable desire to write my memoirs. I'm sure I don't know why I have always so longed to write my memoirs. Perhaps it is because I know that memoirs, however inane, are the only form of literature that is absolutely sure of getting itself read. Then, too, they must be so easy to

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produce. They don't have to be by anybody in particular, and they present no technical difficulties whatever. They have to begin somewhere, but one need never be bothered by wondering how they ought to end. They don't end, they merely stop. Very often indeed they refuse to do even that. Madame de Genlis, for instance, after minutely covering the ground in her "Souvenirs," trimmed a new pen and, without pausing to separate herself into chapters or to take breath, dashed off eight obese volumes of "Mémoires." Like all works of this nature, they are "perfectly fascinating" and are still read, but there is no reason whatever why I shouldn't produce eight volumes just as twaddlesome. For beyond writing materials and a tireless forearm there are in the manufacture of memoirs only two essentials: one must live during an interesting period of the world's history and one must from time to time meet, or at the very least see, a variety of well-known persons. These conditions are extremely difficult to avoid. They arise quite naturally after one

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has taken the first costly and fatally easy step of being born at all. Seventy years afterward every period of the world's history is intensely interesting and nowadays it is quite impossible for the modest, the retiring, the obscure, to evade the overtures of the celebrated. The manner in which they lie in wait for us unknown ones, hunt us down, in fact, is pathetic but brazen. They infest otherwise restful and pleasant clubs, they pervade dinners, they hang on the edge of evening parties, demanding to be met and talked to when one would rather dance or look on. They are always cropping out or "butting in" to the interruption of one's satisfactory routine, just as the marvels of the Yellowstone Park impose upon the placid, smiling face of nature. When they happen to be royal, they ruin health-resorts, make good hotels uninhabitable, render null and void the printed schedules of railways. One summer in Paris I spent most of five weeks in vainly endeavoring to dodge the Shah of Persia. I hardly ever went anywhere that he and his gentlemen in waiting didn't

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arrive a few minutes later and upset my plans for the day. On account of him a brutal and licentious soldiery has driven me from the Louvre, the Luxembourg and the Panthéon with drawn swords, and shoved me around and around the foyers of most of the music halls, but later on I shall, no doubt, refer to him thus: "When not long afterward I was greatly shocked by the news of this pleasure-loving but beneficent ruler's assassination, I recalled his vivacious, oriental, if at times somewhat drowsy personality with genuine regret." (Sunlight and Shadows of My Long Life, Vol. VI, p. 982.) And a year ago in South America, where I naïvely supposed that I should certainly be safe, I had scarcely set foot within the city limits of Buenos Aires before I was, metaphorically speaking, drugged, sandbagged and introduced to Mr. William Jennings Bryan. In his pseudo-presidential frock coat and square-toed kid shoes he looked precisely like a portrait of himself on the front page of *Puck* after it has been fingered for a week in a barber shop.

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“ ‘ Yes,’ he replied with the virile hand grasp that has changed the vote of millions, ‘ yes,’ he heartily agreed, ‘ the days are hot in South America but the nights are cool, and I always maintain that cool nights are more than half the battle.’ Except for the sorcery of his voice and the poignant pleasure he took in making my acquaintance, I think it was this recurrent note of the man’s wholesome optimism that most profoundly impressed me.” (Shadows and Sunlight of My Short Life, Vol. IX, p. 1024.) I left Buenos Aires at once and went to Montevideo, but literally in less than fifteen minutes after I disembarked and strolled up to the principal Plaza I absent-mindedly followed two fat gentlemen in evening dress (it was three o’clock of a fine afternoon) into a public building of some kind, and immediately found myself eating candied pineapple and drinking Pan-American toasts in warm, sweet champagne, with the President of Uruguay. The distinguished, the celebrated, the notorious, the great—from one’s earliest years it is impossible to elude them.

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Presidents! I shall devote sixty-five printed pages to them, beginning with the summer evening when on an errand of mercy (a friend of mine had robbed the till of a grocery store and had sent for me from the police station) I became submerged in a sea of human faces that were waiting for the President and Mrs. Cleveland, and lost in about five minutes a new four-dollar straw hat, a scarfpin, the left sleeve of my coat (an intoxicated patriot pulled it out by the roots and waved it) and nearly, my eager, useful life. For a middle-aged woman clinging to a window below which I was helplessly imbedded suddenly fainted and fell on me. The crowd was so solidly packed that we were unable, for an eternity, to stuff her into an interstice—to restore her right side up to the perpendicular, and all the time we were doing our best to control her arms and legs, and she was kicking noses off with her heels and gouging eyes out with her thumbs, the people in the window were throwing, first glassfuls, then pitcherfuls, and finally pailfuls of water on

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us, and beseeching with paroxysms of m
“Won't somebody *please* bring a little wa
a lady has fainted.” As for writers, of
singers, bishops, actors, diplomatists, N
leons of finance and members of the nobi
they are always scuttling about nowad
“It were a sorrow to count them.” I
make them say some of the most surpri
things, but in the case of persons who I
died I shall write my memoirs conscientio
throughout and record only the remarks
would have enjoyed making but were un
to think of at the time.

My audience at the age of eight with
Holiness Pope Leo XIII, I have alv
thought would open volume the first r
auspiciously. One could draw such a cha
ing little picture of the ivory-white, ethe
old man laying his hand for a moment on
shock of yellow hair and smiling affectiona
at my wondering, upturned face. I remen
I held the ends of his fingers and was be
ning to examine his ring when some
prodded me in the back and in a hoarse,

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tated whisper, reminded me to kiss it. I'm sure I could do all sorts of pleasant things with that unearthly smile and tremulous blessing and sunny hair and upturned face, but chronologically Mrs. White's takes precedence, although even Mrs. White's is not the incident in my intellectual development that I first remember. Sometime before then the detached, austere figure of a beautiful woman became part of my consciousness and recollection and has marvelously remained so ever since. She was at the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 whither I was taken almost in the arms of a fond, and in that instance foolish, grandmother. Gone, gone is the exhibition; I recall nothing of it except a broad, hot walk in a park, bordered by gorgeous flowers. But at the other end of it, no doubt in "Agricultural Hall," alone on a platform and surrounded by the ingenuous Americans of that day, stood the woman. Jets of ice water played gently upon her soft and gracefully molded limbs, for they were of butter and far from acclimated to the debilitating atmosphere

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of Philadelphia in July. I loved that marginal morgue and screamed to be taken back to it whenever I was, as I had to be from time to time, forcibly removed. I can't remember the appearance at that time of anything or anybody else, even of the grandmother who chaperoned us, but I should constantly recognize the dear, long since made work of art in any creamery of the world.

Mrs. White's was a parental mistake. Some children are born without the kindergarten temperament, and when this happens the effort to develop it is usually futile. Not that the mother consciously attempted to do so. A short time ago I asked her why she had been guilty of sending me to Mrs. White's, a blighting even in the bud an originally sound mind, and she was obliged to confess she didn't know. There was in the act no clear and definite concept of education. I suspect her of motives as mixed as they were varied. By sending me to Mrs. White's she could relieve the household of my beloved but exhausting society for hours and hours and hours.

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at a time, she could "help Mrs. White along" and she could give me the opportunity of learning "how to observe." Mrs. White's was the first of Froebel's infantile observatories to make its appearance in our town and strange things were expected of it.

The prospectus said that "the busy baby fingers" were "trained from the first to coordinate and keep pace with the germinating mentality" which, I was to find out, was merely a polite paraphrase of the good old expression "unmitigated hell." Every morning a dire conveyance locally known as the "White Maria," drawn by two rusty, long-haired bay ponies and driven by Mr. White who was likewise long-haired, rusty and bay, careened up to our door at half-past eight and shortly afterwards, depending on the length of time it had taken to extricate me from the banisters of the front stairs among which I had entangled my arms and legs and between which I had thrust my head in order to render my removal as difficult and painful as possible for all concerned, my father would emerge from the

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house flushed, panting but triumphant with screaming, kicking but defeated in his arms. He would then transport me, still howling at the White Maria, thrust me in, slam the door (it opened at the back) and return to exclude to my mother, "I really don't see how we keep this up much longer." Once inside the White Maria the busy baby fingers beat straightway to coördinate and keep pace with the germinating mentality by transforming the dusky interior into a veritable black hole of Calcutta. I slapped faces, pulled hair, kicked shins, threw lunch-baskets on the floor and stamped upon their contents, while the other children, goaded on to madness and piercing shrieks, ran amuck and did the same. White never interfered with this perambulating inferno both because he was of an incorrigible cheerfulness—the result of a severe sunstroke—and because he couldn't see it. One of Mrs. White's specialties was the preservation of nature in all its various, pleasing and instructive moods, the superstructure of the White Maria was a kind of

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mousine of black oilcloth that at any season of the year effectually shut out air, light, the passing landscape and also Mr. White. The "precious freight" (as Mrs. White called us) within could therefore dismember one another undisturbed. After stopping at several more houses to recruit our spent legions we finally arrived at the school, furious, tearful, disheveled, hating life as we have never hated it since, and proceeded at once to praise God in song and thank Him for our manifold and inscrutable blessings.

" Oh, blesséd work,
Oh, blesséd play,
We thank thee for
Another day,"

was the mendacious refrain of every stanza. When sufficiently irritated by anything I can still sometimes remember the tune. Later in the morning we were supplied with round flat disks like poker chips and again burst reluctantly into melody, exclaiming this time, as we shied the disks into a basket on the floor,

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“ Did you ever, ever play
Skipping pebbles on the bay,
On the [something-or-other] water ? ”

Just what kind of water it was, I have never been able to recall. The missing adjective worried me for years. All over the world I have lain awake at night skipping pebbles on the bay for hours and wondering whether the water was “ shining ” or “ glassy ” or “ rippling ” or “ placid ” or “ deep blue. ” Metrical exigencies of course insist that the name shall be written in water of two syllables and I have often cajoled myself into a troubled sleep almost deciding that this particular water must have been “ pretty. ” But even “ pretty ” lacks the certain completely vapid authenticity that ever eludes me.

The blessed play was ghastly enough and the blessed work was torture. I was endowed with neither skill nor patience and at that time I could not lose my shyness before strangers except when I lost my temper. The public exhibition of my inability to “ coördinate ” was a daily anguish, and I do not yet understand

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how I ever at last achieved the unspeakably hideous mat of magenta and yellow paper that after the death of my grandmother I found spotlessly preserved among her most cherished possessions. But I not only did—I furthermore succeeded after days and days of agony in constructing a useless, wobbly, altogether horrible little house out of wire and dried peas. It was characteristic of Mrs. White to select from the comprehensive inventory of the world's possible building materials, wire and dried peas.

If Mrs. White had now and then betrayed the impatience, the annoyance, the despair she had every reason to experience over my stupidity and awkwardness, if at the "psychological moment" she had occasionally spoken sharply, blown me up as did the teachers later at the public school, the effect I am convinced would have been definite and salutary. But hers was the haggard benevolence of the child-gardener in its most indestructible form. All day long sweetness and light glared from her eyes like pharos rays that faileth not because they've

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been wound up. There was in the loving expression around her mouth something appallingly inanimate, objective, detachable; one felt that it hadn't grown there, it had been put. It bore about the same relation to reality as does the art of the confectioner. It lay against her teeth like the thin white icing on a cake, and the hand that itched to box an ear faltered in its flight pausing to caress a curl. It terrified me to realize that the perishable, narrow strips of glazed, colored paper we tried to weave into mats, and the dried peas with which I finally builded better than I knew were, even as the hairs of our heads, all numbered. This was for the purpose of teaching us neatness and thrift—the husbanding of our resources. To crumple the former or scatter the latter was, we knew, a crime, but Mrs. White's method of calling our attention to it was merely an insult to the intelligence. The punishment was a deliberate misfit, an elaborately artificial evasion of the point at issue. When, for instance, a dried pea would slip through my clumsy fingers and rattle over the uncarpet-

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ted floor with what sounded to me like the detonations of artillery, Mrs. White never told me to wake up and be more careful of what I was doing. Instead she would coo like a philandering pigeon and murmur:

“Why, laddie—what would the hungry little birds say if they were to see *all* that nice food wasted!” When panic-stricken at the number of my crumpled failures I feloniously thrust them into my pocket, she would fish them out with sweet amaze, exclaiming:

“Why, dearie—how did *these* get here? Does any little girl or boy know how *all* these poor little strips of paper got into the very bottom of Charlie's dark pocket?” When, as once in so often happened, I would “all alone bewep my outcast state, And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries, And look upon myself and curse my fate,” she never told me to stop, at once and behave myself; she would open her eyes to their incredulous roundest, slightly drop her lower jaw, wonderingly scan every face and then purr:

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“ Why, manny—what’s become of *all* the smiles? ”

There was invariably a reply to these inquiries and it was almost as invariably furnished by one Adelaide Winkle, a dreadful child, but one more sinned against, I now appreciate, than sinning. Forced to the limit in the hothouse of the home, and deeply imbedded in the fertilizing approval of Mrs. White, she was in all our gay little parterre the most brilliant and the most noxious bloom. At the age of seven she already had the executive air of a woman who has long presided over meetings. She also played the piano, danced fancy dances, sang, recited, wore three rings, a necklace and a red plush dress. I hated her, even more if possible than I hated Mrs. White, for she not only kept an eye on my shortcomings, she formulated them into ready words and by request smugly proclaimed them. But it was the manner in which Mrs. White exploited her before strangers that most enraged me. When visitors appeared, as they often did, for a kindergarten under cultivation was a decided

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novelty, Adelaide was called upon to execute her entire program from A to Izzard. She sang, she elocuted "Bobolink, spink, spank, bobolink," she played her show piece ("Fairy Chimes") on the piano, she withdrew to an adjoining room and tripped coquettishly in again, strewing, like the springtime, an armful of tissue-paper roses, and last of all she gave with experiments a short discourse on geography that brought tears to the eyes of the most criminal. The experiments were evolved in sight of the audience with the aid of a large wooden trayful of sand and a tin dipperful of water. Under Adelaide's precocious fingers these helpless elements gave a presumably correct rendering of the Book of Genesis in action, becoming at her will a continent, a river, a lake, an island, a peninsula, a mountain. One downward thrust of an unerring thumb upon a soggy peak and lo! the mountain was a volcano which, Adelaide always ended the lecture by informing us, "Spouts when in a state of ac-tiv-it-y, fire, smoke, glow-ing stones and mol-tennn law-vaw." Powerless to protest,

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and crushed beneath the weight of my own incompetence, I have sat through the performance of this revolting rite as often as three times in a single morning.

Revenge came slowly. It took nineteen years to arrive, but it arrived. Unduly familiar in childhood with continents and dizzy heights, Adelaide, as she matured, reached out, expanded, longed to become a world-power. At the age of twenty-six, therefore, she eloped with a French "count," who not only failed to observe the convention of proving to be a waiter or a hairdresser, he absolutely failed to be anything at all and Adelaide ever since has had to support him.

At eleven o'clock we took a dejected orphan-asylum walk about the suburban streets in two long lines led by the older pupils of the more advanced school downstairs and followed by Mrs. White who, by constantly running back and forth in order to satisfy herself that no one was neglecting to "observe nature," must have covered miles to our blocks. How we all loathed nature! I loved animals

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and plants, clouds and rain, snow and sunshine then as I do now, but "Nature" was something quite different. I don't believe we ever knew what it was and probably connected the term in our minds not with the works of God themselves but with the inescapable obligation of perpetually fussing about them. I without doubt would have ended by becoming very fond of the White Maria's shaggy old ponies, but the labored pretense that we were all dying to bring them a handful of oats for their Thanksgiving dinner and a dozen other pretenses concerning them ended by preventing it. Birds were really wonderful, heavenly creatures to watch and examine, but weeks of prattle about the Christmas present (seeds, bread-crumbs and more oats) of birds we had never seen, merely resulted in a band of ornithological cynics. This fictitious passion for just birds—disembodied, abstract birds, that Mrs. White entirely imagined for us and widely advertised—was taken seriously by our families for years. My grandmother fondly believed in it to the last and almost embittered

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my young life by bequeathing in her will three beautiful family portraits to my brothers, and to me the "nature lover," the unwilling product of Mrs. White's, a set of Audubon!

On our return from the walk Mrs. White inspected our lunch-baskets, confiscating what she considered injurious to our digestions and teeth and allowing us to fortify ourselves against further blessed play and blessed work with the remains. I have often wondered what actually became of the cake and candy she daily took from us "for our own good," and I shouldn't be surprised if she scattered it along the sidewalk or threw it into passing carriages. It would have been a natural reaction from her incessant official pother about "neatness and thrift," but at the time we all of course firmly believed that she put the loot away in a pantry and that the whole White family lived on it for weeks.

Almost everything we learned at Mrs. White's was sure to be incorrect to the point of imbecility. For I don't know how long after leaving there I took it for granted that

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a thoughtful Creator had supplied dear Bossy with a "dewlap" in order that she could wipe dry each mouthful of wet grass before eating it.

"When Bossy goes out to the fields in the morning for her breakfast, this long, soft fold you see here under her neck" (pointing to the picture) "swings from side to side brushing away the damp and chilly dew," Mrs. White had told us, and I need scarcely dwell on the disappointment and sense of injury I experienced when I subsequently sought Bossy in her graminaceous lair and watched her dewlap quite otherwise engaged. But even so, Mrs. White is no more, and anyhow I was always a facile relenter. At times I have been even grateful for Mrs. White's. There was for instance the mystery of Mary Blake and the mystery of the White Maria. I have often been grateful for them.

Mary Blake was an overgrown girl in the school downstairs. She was a most pervasive lass—"a perfect romp." We all knew her well. She belonged to a family prominent in

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our growing town, and although my family and hers were not intimate they no doubt would have thought they were had they unexpectedly met for instance on the spiral stairway of 7 Rue Scribe. There were two sons and four daughters in Mary's family and none of them was named Jane. This is important. Years elapsed. I had spent considerable time abroad, I had been occupied in growing up, in going to school, in preparing for college. There were still four Blake girls, but my interest in them was vague, collective. Then one day I heard of the marriage of Jane Blake, which surprised me somewhat as there had never been a Jane Blake. This led a short time later to my expressing to Mrs. Blake a belated interest in Mary, at which Mrs. Blake looked mystified for a moment and then said, "I think you must mean Susan." I didn't mean Susan but I refrained from saying so, and since then I have been haunted by the mystery of Mary Blake. Apparently there is no Mary Blake and never was one, although in answer to my feverish questionings several

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persons who were at Mrs. White's with her have assured me that they remember her perfectly. Every now and then I meet Jane Blake and talk to her, wondering the while if she can be Mary. That she is dark and Mary was blonde is perhaps negligible. Once I sat next to Jane at dinner and when, after a pause in our conversation, I said, "Come, now—aren't you really your sister who died?" She answered coldly that none of her sisters had ever died and immediately afterward refused to let the servant help her to any more champagne.

The mystery of the White Maria I have never tried to solve. It is enough to know that it was and to wonder if I shall ever again see anything so lovely. The White Maria, as has been mentioned, was a large, square box of black oilcloth. It's inner surface, however, was white, soiled to a neutral gray. On our outward journeys when I noticed this at all it was only to feel the tragedy of life with a greater intensity. But on the return . . . To state in words what we saw when returning gives but little idea of it. We were always

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been wound up. There was in the loving expression around her mouth something appallingly inanimate, objective, detachable; one felt that it hadn't grown there, it had been put. It bore about the same relation to reality as does the art of the confectioner. It lay against her teeth like the thin white icing on a cake, and the hand that itched to box an ear faltered in its flight pausing to caress a curl. It terrified me to realize that the perishable, narrow strips of glazed, colored paper we tried to weave into mats, and the dried peas with which I finally builded better than I knew were, even as the hairs of our heads, all numbered. This was for the purpose of teaching us neatness and thrift—the husbanding of our resources. To crumple the former or scatter the latter was, we knew, a crime, but Mrs. White's method of calling our attention to it was merely an insult to the intelligence. The punishment was a deliberate misfit, an elaborately artificial evasion of the point at issue. When, for instance, a dried pea would slip through my clumsy fingers and rattle over the uncarpet-

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my young life by bequeathing in her will three beautiful family portraits to my brothers, and to me the "nature lover," the unwilling product of Mrs. White's, a set of Audubon!

On our return from the walk Mrs. White inspected our lunch-baskets, confiscating what she considered injurious to our digestions and teeth and allowing us to fortify ourselves against further blessed play and blessed work with the remains. I have often wondered what actually became of the cake and candy she daily took from us "for our own good;" and I shouldn't be surprised if she scattered it along the sidewalk or threw it into passing carriages. It would have been a natural reaction from her incessant official pother about "neatness and thrift," but at the time we all of course firmly believed that she put the loot away in a pantry and that the whole White family lived on it for weeks.

Almost everything we learned at Mrs. White's was sure to be incorrect to the point of imbecility. For I don't know how long after leaving there I took it for granted that

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a thoughtful Creator had supplied dear Bossy with a "dewlap" in order that she could wipe dry each mouthful of wet grass before eating it.

"When Bossy goes out to the fields in the morning for her breakfast, this long, soft fold you see here under her neck" (pointing to the picture) "swings from side to side brushing away the damp and chilly dew," Mrs. White had told us, and I need scarcely dwell on the disappointment and sense of injury I experienced when I subsequently sought Bossy in her graminaceous lair and watched her dewlap quite otherwise engaged. But even so, Mrs. White is no more, and anyhow I was always a facile relenter. At times I have been even grateful for Mrs. White's. There was for instance the mystery of Mary Blake and the mystery of the White Maria. I have often been grateful for them.

Mary Blake was an overgrown girl in the school downstairs. She was a most pervasive lass—"a perfect romp." We all knew her well. She belonged to a family prominent in

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our growing town, and although my family and hers were not intimate they no doubt would have thought they were had they unexpectedly met for instance on the spiral stairway of 7 Rue Scribe. There were two sons and four daughters in Mary's family and none of them was named Jane. This is important. Years elapsed. I had spent considerable time abroad, I had been occupied in growing up, in going to school, in preparing for college. There were still four Blake girls, but my interest in them was vague, collective. Then one day I heard of the marriage of Jane Blake, which surprised me somewhat as there had never been a Jane Blake. This led a short time later to my expressing to Mrs. Blake a belated interest in Mary, at which Mrs. Blake looked mystified for a moment and then said, "I think you must mean Susan." I didn't mean Susan but I refrained from saying so, and since then I have been haunted by the mystery of Mary Blake. Apparently there is no Mary Blake and never was one, although in answer to my feverish questionings several

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persons who were at Mrs. White's with her have assured me that they remember her perfectly. Every now and then I meet Jane Blake and talk to her, wondering the while if she can be Mary. That she is dark and Mary was blonde is perhaps negligible. Once I sat next to Jane at dinner and when, after a pause in our conversation, I said, "Come, now—aren't you really your sister who died?" She answered coldly that none of her sisters had ever died and immediately afterward refused to let the servant help her to any more champagne.

The mystery of the White Maria I have never tried to solve. It is enough to know that it was and to wonder if I shall ever again see anything so lovely. The White Maria, as has been mentioned, was a large, square box of black oilcloth. It's inner surface, however, was white, soiled to a neutral gray. On our outward journeys when I noticed this at all it was only to feel the tragedy of life with a greater intensity. But on the return . . . To state in words what we saw when returning gives but little idea of it. We were always

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tired, silent and a trifle sleepy when we started for home, and we at once leaned back and quietly watched for It. It often appeared but sometimes it refused to show itself for days, and I then used to wonder if I had ever really seen it. The perpetual fascination it had for us was a most complicated one, consisting as it did of the mystery, the beauty, the unreality and the reality of the thing itself, together with the fact that Mrs. White was somehow being thwarted. The black canopy of the White Maria, in a word, sought to imprison us, to impose an impenetrable barrier between us and the outside world, but as we jogged along, the houses, the trees, the horses, the wagons and the people we passed were reproduced in miniature on one of the inside walls. The details were always clear enough to let us know where we were; frequently they were perfect. The little panorama, furthermore, was without color, which gave it an additional, ghostly charm. I have never been hypnotized, but I think in staring at this dreamlike, dissolving procession I used to be very near the hypnotic

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state. At times when the White Maria drew up at our front door I was asleep and it would take me half an hour or more to get back again into my body—I can remember the sensation even if I can't describe it. The moving-picture shows of to-day seem to me like a crude and vulgar attempt to recall and commercialize the age when we were mystics and had visions.

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